

The Kite Flyer

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The Kite Flyer

by [Applebottomgenz](#)

Summary

The cop seemed like he wanted to say something else but stopped. He cleared his throat and rather fatherly ordered, "Well, don't sleep in your car again, son. You enjoy Georgetown now, alright?"

"Yes, sir." Will answered.

The cop left after an awkward beat and Will slammed the door closed, wrapping the blankets more tightly around himself. He looked down at the card.

Domestic abuse hotline.

He threw the offending card in the front into the pile of trash. He scowled at it. Did he really read that easy? He buried his head under the blankets. He refused to admit it. He didn't want help. He was fine on his own.

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OR: The one where homeless Will is running away from his past life and Hannibal's there to pick up the pieces...

But when Will's dark past comes to find him, will Hannibal be able to save him?

Notes

Hello dear readers,

Apple here. I deleted this story (in fact all my works and account) a few months ago for personal reasons. But I really want to finish "Kite Flyer" and share it with all of you. So, I am slowly going to re-upload this work. Please be kind and remember to always read the tags.

I'd love to hear your thoughts and interactions with the story, so feel free to leave a comment if you've enjoyed it.

New chapters will be posted every week on Saturday or Sunday. Happy reading!

-Apple

Freedom is like a kite

The knock on the glass jerked Will awake.

Will scrambled to sit straight as his legs hit the back of the car's front seats and his arm seemed to be trapped under his jacket.

It was still dark outside his car except for the piercing light of a flashlight. Will groaned. He couldn't see who was out there, hopefully not a murderer. But Will didn't care in his half asleep condition. He pushed the door open and looked, blindingly out.

Shit. A cop. Shit, shit, shit. He immediately ducked his head away.

"Are you alright son?" The officer asked. At least he didn't sound pissed. More so, just concerned at Will's disgruntled form.

"Yes, sir," Will mumbled, rubbing his eyes.

"You drunk son?" The officer asked.

Will was sure he looked drunk, his eyes red from his lack of sleep, he felt a bit of drool still on his face he quickly wiped away with the back of his sleeve. He ran a hand through his wild looking bed hair, "No, Sir. Just sleepin'."

The officer made a disbelieving grunt, and turned his flashlight towards the interior of the car. There was a pile of blankets Will was still half wrapped in, a cooler sitting on the floor, a backpack, open and spilling out contents of clothes and socks and books.

In the front seat was a couple pairs of boots, a pile of snack food and a shit ton of trash. On the dash was a map of the states, a toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant, and a bottle of body

wash.

Will felt his face turning red. Before his mother left, she had always told him to never let people see his mess. *It can be shit, but you don't let nobody see that shit. You dress it up with a smile even if you wanna cry.* She always hid how bad things were, until she couldn't anymore. And then she just left the mess behind and ran away.

Will wished he could run and hide as the cop silently surveyed his car he had been living in for the past couple days.

"You homeless, son?"

Yes.

"No, sir. I just moved here for school. I got to town late yesterday. It seemed like a lot of hassle to try and get a motel room for a couple hours."

"What school?"

"Georgetown."

The officer did a double take. Trying to combine Will's disgusting appearance with that of an academic scholar. Will could almost hear the gears turning in the man's head.

He tried to save the cop's brain cells, "On scholarship. It's my first year."

The cop nodded. There was no way Will, with his junk of a car, his old holey flannel, and overall shady looking appearance would be a student at Georgetown.

"You have a dorm to stay in tomorrow?"

No.

"Yeah. Like I said. I just got in late. Louisiana is a bit of a drive" Will lied. He did not have a dorm to go to tomorrow. He had a scholarship, but that only covered his tuition. Housing was a whole other ordeal he was trying not to think about. At least he had the car, even if he did have to steal it from his old man. He prayed his dad would be too drunk to notice the missing car and his missing son.

"Well, I won't give you a ticket or anything," the way the cop said it made it sound like he was going out of his way to be a saint, "But be sure to get your parking tags and don't sleep in your car. It's dangerous."

"Yes sir." Will nodded.

"This ain't Louisiana. You can't sleep in your car and expect it to be safe," The cop said gruffly.

Will disagreed. Anywhere was safer than Louisiana. He'd sleep in a trailer in the middle of a hurricane as long as it was across state lines. Away from there. Away from *him* .

But he just nodded his head in agreement, "Yes sir."

The cop shined the flashlight in his face. Will flinched at the bright light. Turning his face away. He realized his mistake too late.

"Jeez," the cop whistled, "What the hell happened to that eye."

Will rubbed the back of his neck nervously, "I tripped."

The cop had the audacity to chuckle, "Fall right into a fist?"

Will scowled but said nothing. The cop seemed to have pity on him, "Look," he pulled out a card from his back pocket and held it out to the young man, "This is the contact info for a shelter. Ok? Take it just in case."

Will took the card begrudgingly, refusing to meet the officer's eyes. The cop seemed like he wanted to say something else but stopped. He cleared his throat and rather fatherly ordered, "Well, don't sleep in your car again, son. You enjoy Georgetown now, alright?"

"Yes, sir." Will answered.

The cop left after an awkward beat and Will slammed the door closed, wrapping the blankets more tightly around himself. He looked down at the card.

Domestic abuse hotline.

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Will was far from fine. But he was better than he'd been in a while.

He had been applying to colleges everywhere except in the south, hoping there was some way he'd get out from his dad and from *him*. He spent his nights sneaking away to 24 hour lounges to write essays and apply for grants. He knew early on he couldn't have anything sent to his Dad's trailer home. The old man would find it and beat his ass. Or worse *he'd* find it

and never allow Will out of *his* sight again. Instead Will bought a PO box and hoped and prayed *he* wouldn't see him coming and going from the post office.

He accepted the first one that covered tuition. He was too scared to keep checking. He accepted and then didn't think about it until a week before classes started. He didn't plan anything. The night before he left, *he* had roughed him up a bit, nothing worse than normal. Will went home, grabbed his dad's keys, and booked it. He didn't stop driving until Louisiana was far behind him.

Sure, he didn't have a place to stay. Not a dime to his name, nor a friend in sight. But he was free, and it was the best feeling ever.

*

Classes were refreshing for once. On his first day, he had two of his classes and he was enjoying them immensely. The first was an intro to forensic science and the second an English course. He sat with a nice looking girl, Beverly, in the English class. She chatted at him for a good portion of the class's free time. Will nodded along with her, it was kind of pleasant to have someone to fill the quiet.

Afterwards, at lunch time, Beverly attempted to drag him to the dining hall where all the students were filing in to eat, but Will had no meal card, nor did he have any cash to pay.

"Are you sure you don't want to grab something, Will?" Beverly pleaded.

Yes, I'd love to eat—

"No. I'm commuting, so I don't have a meal card," Will explained.

Beverly pouted, "Oh come on! Please? I'll swipe you in," She waved her meal card temptingly in front of him.

Will forced a smile, “Thanks Bev, but I really should be going. Maybe another time?”

She sighed exasperated, but waved goodbye to him, “Ok, but you'd better eat, you're too skinny, Will! See you later, loser!”

Will watched as Beverly skipped off, throwing him a friendly middle finger. He waved goodbye at her before turning and beginning his long walk back to his car. He'd managed to find free parking semi-close to the school at a public library.

A mile is fairly close, right?

After the long walk, his feet were sore and the wind was getting very chilly. He went into the public library to warm up while he used the free computers. He printed his syllabi and began working on several of his projects. Before too long the library announced they were closing. He quickly searched the nearby areas looking for job openings that might work with his class schedule. He knew he was pushing his luck as everyone else filed out of the library's doors while he scribbled addresses on a piece of scrap paper. Before long a stern librarian was standing over his shoulder tapping her foot impatiently. He apologized and headed out with his paper of potential jobs.

It had gotten colder outside. It never got this cold in the South. He didn't own a coat, just a couple shirts, some flannels, and a hoodie. He pulled both his mismatching flannels over the hoodie on as he started his car. Better to be warm than stylish. He looked down at the addresses he'd written, vaguely remembering where they were located.

The first was a coffee shop. The manager took one look at Will's multi-layered outfit and told him they weren't looking for anyone. Will didn't push it, he left and drove to the next one. It was a hardware store. The manager, Mister Gillespie, was a rough looking character who had little patience. Mr. Gillespie told him to move around a bunch of heavy boxes and when Will managed to (with lots of gasping and sweat pouring down his face), he hired him on the spot. Will left happy and sweaty with the first day of work scheduled.

He went to one more place, another coffee shop. It seemed D.C. couldn't get enough of them. He hoped he could get another job, so in the next few months he might be able to get an apartment. *Dream big, right?*

The manager seemed nice and sympathetic to his plight. She was a bit concerned by his lack of experience though. “So have you ever actually made coffee?” Alana, the friendly manager, asked.

“Nothing fancy,” Will shrugged, “But I’m a fast learner and I think I would be a good fit here.”

Alana hummed, uncertain, “I don’t know, Will. We usually hire people with barista experience.”

Will’s shoulders slumped.

“But, tell you what,” She continued, “We are always crazy short weekend mornings. Why don’t you come in and help manage the register? Maybe make a couple coffees, if you do well maybe we can talk about you doing more.”

Will perked up immediately, “Absolutely! I’m free on the weekends, I can definitely work then!” Will agreed eagerly. He left the shop in high spirits. It seemed so easy to get a job now. Down in Louisiana, *he* ’d be breathing down his neck and probably threaten anyone who even offered Will a job. It was like a weight was lifted off his shoulders. Will could do anything-- maybe even fly.

Will practically skipped back to his car. It was such a relief to be free.

It soars and plummets

Chapter Summary

Thanks for all the kind welcome backs, I hope to do this story justice. 💜

Will slept trembling in his car. He parked it at the back of a library parking lot, behind their dumpster. He worried a cop would knock on his window again, but he didn't have any money to park it anywhere else.

After waking, he ate his last granola bar, before grabbing his backpack and heading for campus. He was excited to check out the gym. He heard there were showers and god did he need a shower. The walk to the school at least kept him decently warm. He was really considering buying a coat before food depending on how cold it got.

The gym was huge and spacious. With a flash of his school ID he was inside. The reception even had a basket of free fruit. He grabbed two bananas and an orange, happy to know he'd have something for lunch. He headed back to the locker rooms. It was a nice room with metal lockers that didn't have a speck of rust on them, tile floors so shiny they gleamed, and warm steamy showers just beckoning Will to their heat.

Will glanced nervously around. The locker rooms were empty at the moment, but that might change at any moment. There was only one private shower, the rest were out in the open. He checked behind the curtain ensuring no one was there. Now safe, he stripped his dirty clothes and turned the warm spray on. It stung his skin, especially his back, but he knew he needed to clean his wounds. He washed and scrubbed his body until he finally felt cleanish. He was about to finish when he realized he'd left his clean clothes in his backpack across the locker room and his dirty clothes were wet from the shower spray.

It's not that bad, just walk out and grab your bag and come back. Will tried to talk himself up. Just as he was about to dart out naked from behind the curtain he heard the locker room door open and voices entering the showering area.

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck! Will hid behind the curtain, awkwardly turning on the shower once more, so whoever was out there would know the private show was occupied. Voices continued to laugh and shout as Will stayed huddled behind the shower curtain.

“Hello? Are you almost done using the shower?” A voice asked, making Will jump.

“Uh, yeah. Sorry,” Will answered before he could stop himself. He cursed under his breath not knowing what to do.

“Do you need a minute?” The voice asked politely.

“Yeah, sorry, I just—” Will scrambled to think, “I just brought my clothes in here and now they’re all wet— I have extra in my bag, but’s on the other side.”

“What does it look like?”

“Oh you don’t have to—”

“I insist. You can’t put on wet clothes. Now, what does it look like?”

“It’s the blue one. It’s just sitting on the bench.”

The voice didn’t answer, but a second later Will’s backpack was placed at the edge of the curtain. “This the one?” The voice asked.

“Yes, thank you so much!” Will gratefully grabbed the backpack and pulled it into the shower’s confines.

“No, worries, take your time.” The voice answered calmly.

Despite the request, Will dressed hurriedly, afraid of angering the kind soul who helped him. He stuffed his dirty clothes down in his bag and slugged it over his shoulder. He exited the shower, looking around nervously. Several men were showering in the public showers, but one was waiting patiently on the bench looking like a Greek god. Will had to make sure his mouth was closed so he wasn't gapping.

The man was quite handsome with sandy blonde hair and shoulders broad enough to be considered a swimmer's. In fact, Will was fairly certain that was exactly what this man was as he was dressed in nothing but a speedo that hugged his bulge divinely. Will forced his eyes up, following the trail of hair from his navel to his broad chest. God, his chest was still wet from the water, but he looked so relaxed lounging on the bench waiting for Will to finish. Was he sleeping? His eyes were closed and he gave no semblance that he heard Will exit.

Will cleared his throat, "Eh, sorry. Finished now. Thanks for helping and waiting and stuff."

The man's eyes flashed opened, and if Will was drooling earlier, now he focused on keeping his knees from turning weak. He swallowed hard as those brown almost maroon eyes held his gaze. The man smiled slowly, analyzing Will, "Don't worry about it. The school should really put in more private showers."

"Or you could shower with us peasants Hannibal!" One of the men showering shouted over.

Hannibal gave the man a good natured smile, "Maybe when you learn to shower like a person and not like a pig, I'll consider it."

There were several "oohs" and hoots at that, but the group seemed to be friendly and this seemed to be a normal occurrence between the two men. The hot guy— Hannibal— turned back to Will smiling, "I hope I didn't rush you, we just got out of swim practice."

Will shook his head, "Not at all."

"Good. I'm Hannibal, by the way."

“I’m Will.”

“Nice to meet you Will,” Hannibal gave him one last drop dead gorgeous smile, before slipping into the shower and sliding the curtain shut.

Christ, if that wasn't the sexiest guy ever seen. Will shook his head, trying to clear his head. But he could keep those piercing eyes and the bright smile that made butterflies flutter in his stomach. He should know better than to fall for a handsome face. Not again. He hurried out of the locker room.

*

After the shower fiasco, Will had extra time before classes began, he spent his time in the library working on assignments on the shared computers and enjoying the heated building. The basement of the library even had giant comfy beanbags. Will wanted to nap nestled in one, but there were too many rowdy students present. Plus sleeping in busy places was just asking for trouble.

He went to psychology class, and was pleasantly surprised to see Beverly there. When she spotted him, her face lit up in a grin, “Will!” She waved, “Come sit with me!”

Will went smiling softly at having already made a friend. He liked Beverly a lot, she was easy to get along with. He sat next to her as she bubbled off a hundred different topics relating to her first day.

“...And you have to come to lunch with me today!” Beverly’s voice demanded, “They’re serving sushi! I’ll swipe you in, just come have lunch with me, it’ll be fun!”

Will shrugged, “I brought my lunch.” A banana I stole from the gym.

“Oh, come on! I know you wanna eat sushi,” Beverly wriggled her eyebrows.

Sushi does sound good. At that moment Will's stomach decided to betray him and grumble.

"Ha!" Beverly pointed at his traitorous middle, "You totally want sushi!"

"Look," Will pulled out the banana from his bag and waved it in front of her face, "See I have lunch."

"That cannot be the only thing you're eating," A new voice asked.

Will turned and his heart halfway stopped. *Holy fuck did I die and go to heaven?* It was the handsome guy from the showers— Hannibal! Drop dead gorgeous, Hannibal. He was standing by their table, dressed in slacks and a cream button up. By all accounts, he was dressed to teach the class. Only he was standing with his computer bag slung over his shoulder, and now he pulling out the chair next to Will and now he was smiling at him and now his mouth was moving and now—

"Is this seat taken?"

"What?" Will asked stupidly.

"May I sit here? I don't want to intrude." Hannibal explained seriously.

"Uh," Will said very intelligently. "I, uh, I dunno, I—"

Beverly elbowed him in the ribs. It was barely a nudge, but it hit bruises left by him. Will gasped softly, but thankfully his revelry was broken.

"You can sit here."

Beverly shot him a wiry grin. Her eyebrow wriggle told him they'd definitely be speaking about this after class. Thankfully, the professor walked in and students rushed to prep their desks. Beverly pulled out a sticker covered laptop. Hannibal slid into the seat next to him, giving Will ample time to admire how his shirt stretched nicely across his toned chest and shoulders. The fabric pulled against the man's back muscles as Hannibal leaned down to place his bag on the ground and pull a sleek macbook from it.

Will forced his eyes away from his table mate and hurriedly grabbed his beat-up 25-cent notebook that he'd nabbed from a clearance bin from Walmart and a sharpened pencil missing the erasure due to Will's constant chewing of the top. Everyone in the class had a laptop out, ready to take notes, except Will.

He tried to ignore the few glances he got from around the room. It didn't matter how they took notes, just that the information was understood. Technology had nothing to do with how a student succeeded in the class. At least that's what he told himself.

The world seemed like it wanted to laugh at him though.

"You will need a camera for your first assignment of the semester," The professor said as he walked through the subjects outlined in the syllabus.

Fuck.

"I want you to take photos of everyday social occurrences and then you will present how societal norms or culture affects those interactions."

Will raised his hand. The professor nodded at him, "Yes?"

"What if we don't have a camera?"

“Most cell phones have a fairly decent camera. You don’t have to be a national geographic photographer– just get a snapshot.”

The professor turned to move on, but Will piped up again, “What if we don’t have a cell phone?”

The professor frowned, annoyed at Will’s questions, “Why don’t you come talk to me after the class.”

Will felt his cheeks turn red and he sunk down in his seat embarrassed at how many eyes were on him. Judging his clothes, his notebook, his disheveled appearance. And now his lack of a cell phone. *He* had bought him one once, but it was more of a tool to keep track of where Will was at all times. Will hated it. That’s why he’d left it beside his bed back in Louisiana.

Beverly leaned in close, "Hey, no worries. You can use my phone for photos."

Will nodded curtly. He appreciated Beverly's offer, but it made his stomach turn. He hated relying on anyone. It made him feel trapped. Add phone to the list of things he needed:

Apartment, food, coat, and phone.

He lost focus the rest of the class. Purely trying to keep his heart rate steady and hands from shaking. *Fuck, how am I supposed to do this?*

Class finished, but he barely noticed.

"Will?" Beverly asked, putting her laptop away, "You OK there loser?"

Will jerked, "I, uh– yeah. Yeah sorry."

"Are you coming to lunch now?" Beverly gave him a friendly punch on the shoulder.

He winced, but smiled at her, "I brought lunch."

"Oh come on," Beverly whined.

"May I join you?" The rich accented voice asked. Hannibal was looking especially handsome and was looking at Will with, what looked like hope in his eyes.

"I'm Hannibal Lecter," Hannibal introduced himself to Beverly, "I transferred here from Italy. I'm afraid I don't know much about the school, other than what my swim team has shown me."

Beverly raised her eyebrow, "Beverly Katz. I don't mind you coming. We just have to convince Will."

They both turned towards him looking devilishly expectant. He blushed, sighing in defeat, "Fine. But I seriously did bring lunch."

Beverly rolled her eyes, "Ok, Mr. Packs his own lunch. Let's go eat sushi."

The three of them made their way from class. The professor had already disappeared and Will was not going to go see him at office hours. For some reason the way the man had sneered, come see me after class, had Will's brain firing warning signals. He wasn't stupid, he knew the professor wouldn't be accommodating.

Will walked beside Beverly. He could tell Hannibal wanted to walk beside him in the row, but the hall was too narrow for the three, so Hannibal had to walk behind them. Will could feel his eyes on his back.

"My aunt always made sashimi in Italy," Hannibal said, attempting to enter the conversation.

"What's that?" Will asked feeling dumb at not knowing.

"It's a form of sushi. There are differences between the dishes, but they are often not separated in western culture."

"Are you a culinary student?" Beverly asked.

Hannibal chuckled, "I wish, but alas, my aunt wants me to pursue the medical field. I'm a 3rd year pre-medicine student."

"You're almost a senior!" Beverly cheered.

Hannibal nodded, "Yes, if I do well I can move on to medical school."

"Where do you want to go?" Will asked. Hannibal's eyes crinkled on the edges. The man didn't show many emotions but even that subtle show meant he was pleased. Pleased with Will.

For crying out loud. Stop being a fucking sop.

"I'm in discussions with John Hopkins. They are a wonderful school, and they have an interesting internship for medical drawings. Anatomical drawing is a speciality of mine."

Beverly whistled, "Is there anything you can't do?"

Will chuckled. It seemed like this man had everything. Will wasn't quite sure if he was feeling more jealous or in awe of Hannibal.

Hannibal smiled good naturedly at them both, "Well there is a possibility I cannot convince Will to eat a full meal."

Beverly snorted.

"Hey!" Will gasped in dismay.

Will was proud he didn't flinch, when Beverly poked him in the stomach, "You need to eat more."

"I have a fast metabolism," Will shrugged.

"All the more reason for you to eat," Hannibal teased. His hand brushed Will's shoulder. The light touch sent butterflies spinning in his stomach.

Stop that. You're just touch starved.

They made it to the cafeteria where Beverly swiped him in. She linked his arm with hers and led him to the sushi line, Hannibal wandered after them.

"He likes you," Beverly whispered in his ear.

Will blushed, happy he wasn't facing Hannibal, "Yeah, I doubt that."

Beverly rolled her eyes, "You're dumber than you look."

They got their sushi and sat together at a table. Beverly sat first placing her backpack on the chair beside her, forcing Will to sit on the other side: right beside Hannibal.

Will glared at her but slipped into his seat, his elbow brushing Hannibal's.

"Sorry," He muttered, his eyes glued to his plate of sushi. It looked delicious, and Will would stuff himself if his stomach wasn't doing gymnastics with anxiety.

"No worries," Hannibal answered confidentially. He picked up his pair of chopsticks, "Shall we?"

"Bon appetit!" Beverly grinned.

Will quickly realized he was abominable with chopsticks. He tried to copy Beverly, but the food just kept slipping from the stick's grasp.

Beverly found this very amusing and was snickering at his efforts. Will was just about to give up when Hannibal leaned close.

"Here, Will," Hannibal's hand covered his own, making his heart stop, "Let me show you."

Oh God, he has no right sounding that hot and why are his hands so soft?

Hannibal's face was right by Will's ear. His breath tickled every nerve in Will's body, sending goosebumps down his arm. The man maneuvered Will's fingers, changing his grip on the utensils.

"If you hold them up here, you can control them more easily," Hannibal's deep voice sounded. Will was flushed a bright pink and Beverly was grinning madly at him. With Hannibal's hand guiding his, Will plucked a piece of the roll and, surprising himself, managed to put it in his mouth without dropping it.

“Good,” Hannibal whispered.

Will was glad his mouth was full so he didn't have to try to respond to *that*. Will was pretty sure this was the most erotic sushi lunch he'd ever eaten, but then again his brain was all messed up when it came to flirting. He was never sure of people's intentions. He had made sure Will never knew what was coming. Will could never guess if he was going to get kissed or hit until it was happening.

“You try,” Hannibal encouraged, his hands leaving Will's.

Will nodded and attempted again. It was less graceful without Hannibal's guidance, but the sushi managed to make it into his mouth, so he couldn't complain.

“Thanks,” He mumbled before ducking his head and digging in.

Hannibal and Beverly kept up a conversation, they seemed to get that Will wasn't all that talkative. Pretty soon Hannibal had to run to his next class. He stood, gather his things.

“Thank you for allowing me to crash your lunch, I appreciate meeting peers other than my swim team.”

“You have to join us again,” Beverly said, “We can make this a habit going to lunch after psychology class. What do you think?”

Hannibal looked at Will for his answer.

Will could honestly say he enjoyed the company. And the food was wonderful. He didn't have to worry about being hungry or saying something stupid that would end in a beating. It was comfortable with Beverly and Hannibal. And he was 99% percent sure Hannibal was just a big flirt. Nothing to worry about. He nodded shyly, “I'd like that”

Hannibal gave him one of his dashing smiles in reward, “Good, we can make sure Will eats something during the week.” He reached down and lightly squeezed Will’s shoulder.

“See you in the showers?” Hannibal winked before leaving.

They watched him walk away. As soon as he exited through the cafeteria doors, Beverly was squealing, “Oh my gosh Will! What was all that? Are you a thing?”

Will groaned, “It’s nothing.”

Beverly gave him a look of disbelief, “I highly doubt that. He was all over you during lunch.”

Will frowned, “He wasn’t ‘all over me’. He just wants friends.”

Beverly’s eyebrow almost disappeared into her hair, “I’m pretty sure he likes you— just from my perspective. I mean, he couldn’t keep his eyes off of you.”

Will shivered at that. He really didn’t need an obsessive relationship right now, not after just running from one. “Well, I don’t like him like that, so there’s that.”

Except he’s like the most attractive person I’ve ever seen... Beverly didn’t need to know that.

Beverly stopped her pressuring, but she couldn’t help asking, “What was the whole ‘see you in the showers’ thing?”

Will smiled softly, remembering how Hannibal had saved him, “We met this morning at the gym, in the locker rooms.”

Will could tell Beverly was bursting with questions, but a look at the time had him on his feet.

“Oh, shit. I gotta go Beverly. I have my first shift at work today.” Will explained hurriedly.

“Oh, okay– Hey, I’ll email you photos for you to use for the presentation, OK?”

“Thanks Bev,” Will breathed gratefully, “You’re a lifesaver.”

“Of course, I am,” Beverly grinned tossing her hair playfully, “Now go, before you’re late!”

Will waved and dashed off the work. It seemed today had been successful. He’d made friends, ate delicious food, and now was going to make some cold hard cash. He could do this. He could make it.

Battered by Harsh North Winds

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS: Graphic violence

The following days were rough. Will worked his ass off at the hardware store and was impatiently waiting for his first check to come. Two weeks. He had to work two weeks to see the money. The date was only 3 days away and Will anxiously awaited the cash.

He couldn't move his car from the library's lot. He'd run out of gas soon after arriving to D.C and he didn't have money to refill it. He walked everywhere and was extremely thankful his jobs were near the school. The brisk walk warmed his freezing body and he could focus on putting one foot in front of the other, and not the gnawing in his stomach. He knew he was slowly starving, but there was little he could do except keep working.

He was completely reliant on stealing fruit from the gym every morning to sustain himself throughout the day. He looked forward to the days when they had psychology class. Not because of the class, but because it was lunch day. Beverly and Hannibal would walk to the dining hall after class and eat the most delicious-filling-lifegiving food he'd ever tasted.

They were also growing closer to each other. Hannibal, it turns out, had no weaknesses, excelling at art, music, sports, language, and being 100% the sexiest man on earth.

Will still ran into him at the gym. Hannibal would wait for him outside the shower, practically naked, just to look at Will (*fully dressed mind you*) leaving.

They'd always exchange morning pleasantries and Hannibal would demand he see him soon.

"Good morning, Will," Hannibal would say in his deep accented voice.

Blushing down to his feet, Will would fidget side to side before offering a quick, "Morning."

Because no one said Will's name like that. Like it was something special. Like he was something important and, dare he think it, something cherished.

Hannibal would grin at him all the while appraising his slumped shoulders and baggy clothes. Will couldn't tell if Hannibal was judging his clothing or just trying to see past Will's forts.

Today, Hannibal turned up with Tupperware. He handed Will the container, "I made ravioli, would you like some?"

Will shook his head, "No, I'm good."

Hannibal's face dropped and Will's stomach twisted. *Shit, can you please take your foot out of your mouth? And take the food the nice man gives you?*

Thankfully, Hannibal wasn't that easily persuaded, "I made too much for myself, I would hate for it to go to waste..."

Will nodded probably a bit too quickly, "Ok."

The look on Hannibal's face was better than the ravioli (*which was saying something because it was delicious*) and Will's heart fluttered at making Hannibal smile.

Hannibal stood, dressed in nothing but his skin tight bathing suit, and handed Will the Tupperware. Their hands brushed and Will let out an audible gasp when goosebumps spread along his arms. Then Hannibal's hand was brushing a curl from his face and tucking it behind his ear. Will blinked dumbly up at the man, half expecting to be shoved against a wall and kissed until his lips bled.

"You look tired Will, you should try to rest."

Will nodded, feeling mute and stupid. Hannibal smiled. *God why did he have to be so kind?* Hannibal's hands trailed up his arms before giving Will's shoulders a reassuring squeeze.

"I'll see you at class?"

Will nodded again. *Had he lost the ability to speak?*

"Good," Hannibal paused, his eyes darting to Will's lips.

Is he going to kiss me?

Hannibal tore his eyes away and stepped back. He quirked a grin and stepped around Will to the shower. "See you later, mongoose," Hannibal said so fondly before pulling the shower curtain closed.

Will let out a breath he'd been holding. Did he just call him a mongoose? Why did that somehow sound nice coming from Hannibal? He shook himself. He was not going to fall for some smooth talking European with the body of a god. Nope. No way.

"Care to join?" Hannibal's silky voice asked from behind the curtain.

Will yelped and fled the locker rooms. Red as a tomato. He could hear Hannibal softly chuckling behind him.

*

Well after that fiasco, Will banished himself to the library where he managed to sleep somewhat undisturbed for a few hours.

It had become hard to sleep in his car. It was just so damn cold. Will would wake shaking as he tried to not freeze. His teeth chattering, and though his car blocked the wind, the cold seemed to seep in from everywhere. And while his morning walk to the campus warmed him slightly, it left him exhausted. He would stand under the shower just thawing out from the cold and the weariness in his bones. It wasn't even winter yet.

Will had pillaged the Salvation Army hoping to find a coat, but they were holding them all for their winter coat drive. Four weeks away. At least he'd have money by then.

He woke just in time to stumble over to psychology. Beverly gave him a concerned frown before launching into seven reasons why sleep is important for human health.

"I mean, Will you look really bad. Like really tired. You shouldn't stay up so late studying," Beverly bossed him around. If only she knew he wasn't studying all night but shivering with cold.

"Anyway, I was thinking we could take our photos for class at lunch."

The assignment was due tomorrow. Will had learned that Beverly was an expert procrastinator. He preferred to get the work done quickly, so he didn't have to worry about it while he was at his jobs. He had enough to worry about as it was. But he wasn't about to pressure Beverly, not when she was letting him borrow her phone for pictures.

"That sounds good," Will agreed.

"You haven't finished it yet?" Hannibal asked, being annoyingly nosey and also a little smug. He was always smug and nosey and hot. It was rather annoying.

"And you have, Mr. Perfect?" Beverly rolled her eyes.

"Yes," Hannibal agreed smugly. Will had thought it was hard to read Hannibal's expressions at first, but now he was drowning in just how much *smugness* Hannibal radiated.

"Any tips?" Will asked good naturedly, Hannibal was the type of person that would read the instructions in detail and capture any hidden component of the assignment. Not that Will wouldn't, he just didn't have a lot of time or energy.

Hannibal placed his hand on his shoulder and leaned in close. He whispered sensually, "I could always give you a few tips after hours."

Will shrugged his hand off. He did not like how that made him feel. It reminded him too much of *him*. He glared at Hannibal, "Ha. Ha. Seriously. Any tips?"

There was a moment where an expression of hurt flitted across Hannibal's face, but then it was gone. He smiled at Will reassuring, "You'll do fine. Just take photos to match the social concepts you want to talk about."

Will nodded, Hannibal had moved away so Will didn't feel so absolutely suffocated by him.

After class, they went to the dining hall. Beverly was obnoxiously snapping pictures of everyone and everything claiming it was all part of the social construct project. Will rolled his eyes at her, but didn't say anything. More pictures they had the better.

They sat, Beverly across and Will and Hannibal next to one another. They hadn't changed that position from the beginning. Will kind of liked it that way. He didn't have to look directly at Hannibal, even though it made Will turn a bit red every time Hannibal slung his arm across the back of his chair. *Jesus, did he think he was being smooth?*

Oh, but he absolutely was being smooth. Very successfully in fact.

Will tapped the table, grabbing Beverly's attention. He nodded at a group of people eating across from them, "Hey, take their picture."

Beverly swung around and snapped a photo grinning madly. Will popped a French fry in his mouth and rolled his eyes, "You're not at all obvious."

"Very covert," Hannibal agreed with a chuckle.

"Well, it seems less stalkerish if I make a big deal about taking the picture," Beverly smiled sweetly.

"That's true," Will murmured. *He* had always made a big deal about taking pictures. And *he* wasn't a stalker, more like an obsessive maniac with his claws stuck deep in Will.

"Are you OK, Will?" Hannibal asked.

Will blinked realizing he had zoned out. He cleared his throat, looking down, "Ah, yeah. Sorry, just thinking."

"Think less, eat more!" Beverly urged. She was constantly telling him to eat.

Will took a few more bites of the drooping French fries. He was full, but he knew he should eat more to get him through the rest of the day.

"I really don't know what I'm going to do with this project," Beverly whined as she stood to take pictures of a couple getting sodas at the fountain. "I mean to me it looks like two people getting drinks. What social concepts goes with that?"

Will glanced at the couple, surprised Beverly couldn't see the multi-level intensity of the single interaction. He shrugged, "There's a lot going on there."

Beverly raised her eyebrows, "Oh, yeah? Like deciding what soda they should get?"

Will shrugged, "Yeah... and some more."

"Explain Einstein. I don't want to fail," Beverly said, crossing her arms unconvinced.

"Well, you see how he let her get her drink first? He got there first but he's waiting for her to go first. He's nervous. He's smiling a lot and looking everywhere except her."

"First date?"

"Maybe, but more likely perpetually stuck in the talking stage. He wants to impress her but he's not confident enough to do anything drastic. He's mirroring her body language and even got the same drink after she did."

"Building similarities," Hannibal agreed.

"Yeah, except she is never going to like him back," Will noted.

"Why's that?" Beverly asked intrigued.

Will gave a little smirk, "Because she was checking out the girl behind him."

"What?" Beverly gasped like it was the juiciest gossip.

Will's eyes twinkled. He loved this. Reading people was so easy, it was fun using it like a party trick. He gave Beverly a wink, "Plus when she spotted *you* taking her picture, she definitely gave you a look over."

Beverly's mouth was gapping, "I don't believe you."

Will shrugged, "Your loss."

Beverly stared at him, trying to see if he was kidding or not. Finally she huffed and stood, "There's only one way to find out."

Beverly marched towards the couple, tossing her hair over her shoulder and looking determined. Will watched amused as Beverly awkwardly introduced herself.

"That is quite the talent you have there." Hannibal said, almost making Will jump.

He blushed, because he literally could not stop blushing around Hannibal, "Thanks."

"Not many people could see that."

Will shrugged picking at his fries, "Yeah."

"How did you see it?" Hannibal asked curiously.

Will nervously licked his lips, "Just observant, that's all."

"One would call that more than observant." Hannibal prompted.

"Observant along with having too many mirror neurons," Will answered bitterly. Hannibal was quiet and Will didn't want to look at his face. He waved his hand dismissively, "It's an empathy disorder."

"A gift," Hannibal said.

Will snorted, "Definitely not. At best, a good party trick."

He liked party tricks . Will's brain suddenly said. He pushed that thought away.

"Jesus Will, " Beverly flaunts as she returns, "you're either going to pass with flying colors or Prof is gonna fail you for guessing everything."

"Did I guess right?" Will asked cheekily.

Beverly grinned waving her phone around, "Got her number."

"Hey, picture!" Will snapped, gesturing to the guy who was leaving the girl, he looked utterly dejected. "Leaving quietly, because society says we can't make a fuss about broken hearts, especially from unrequited love." Will surmised.

"You're absolutely heartless, Will," Beverly jokes.

"Society's heartless," Will argued, "The moment you step out of line, it will eat you. You have to obey its rules or get devoured."

*

They left lunch soon after, Beverly told him she'd email him the pictures within the hour before dashing off to her next class. Hannibal lingered, even though Will knew he had a class. They stood awkwardly in the student center neither really wanting to leave, but not really knowing what to do next.

Hannibal broke the silence, "You still have the ravioli?"

Will patted his backpack, "Right here. Thanks by the way, I'm sure it'll be delicious."

Hannibal gave him a small smile, "I'm glad you have it. I like cooking for other people. I especially like cooking for you."

What the fuck does that mean? Will didn't dare look at Hannibal, because if he looked, he would definitely know what that meant.

Coward.

Will tried to deflect the comment, "Once you're a doctor you can host dinner parties every week. Maybe you'll get tired of making everyone food."

Hannibal sighed, eyes looking away. And Will realized that might not have been the polite thing to say when the man had just made him food. He winced, "Sorry."

"Don't be. You're right," Hannibal swiftly, surprising Will, "I would get tired of feeding everyone. It would become a bore cooking for them."

Will shuffled his feet. Trying to embrace just how awkward this conversation was as a punishment for his rude words. But Hannibal wasn't finished.

"Because I don't want to feed all of them. I want to cook for you."

Oh. *Oh.*

"Would you let me cook for you?" Hannibal asked.

"I– uh," Will stumbled lamely, "I mean, you already cooked for me." He gestured vaguely to his bag, "Ravioli."

Will glanced up, Hannibal was looking at him so fondly it made him look away immediately. Hannibal stepped into his space, reaching down and taking his hand.

"I'd rather like to have you over for dinner at my place. Food is best served hot."

"You're inviting me over?" Will asked flustered.

"Yes," Hannibal grinned.

"Like on a date?" Will nervously looked down. He'd only been on "dates" with *him* . Would Hannibal be like *him* ?

"If you'd like to call it that," Hannibal's thumb gently stroked the back of Will's hand, "It can also be dinner between friends."

"No strings attached?" Will asked, trying to keep the tremble from his voice.

Hannibal's fingers touched his chin, and Will looked up. Hannibal was looking at him with such adoration, "No strings attached. Not if you don't want them."

Will let out a shaky breath, "Ok."

Hannibal's face broke into a huge genuine smile, "Ok?"

Will nodded briskly, stepping away, "Yeah."

Hannibal still had his hand and he raised it lowering his head. His lips ghosted Will's knuckles. Before releasing Will's hand back.

What in the 18th century courting was that?

Will blinked dumbly at Hannibal before awkwardly turning the opposite way and dashing off. He didn't look back to see if Hannibal was watching him leave.

It was only until he had made it to the public library that he realized Hannibal hadn't even told him a time or even a location. He let out a sigh of relief. It wasn't real. Not yet. Hannibal had only suggested it. And it wasn't like Will had to agree to go or anything.

He tried to push his thoughts of Hannibal aside and threw himself into the project. Beverly had emailed him the pictures and he quickly wrote his paper and made a simple presentation for tomorrow. Beverly would let him use her computer for the presentation. Will felt he was a much better writer than presenter, but he tried his hardest to overcome it.

He ate the now cold ravioli in the library's bathroom. He didn't want anyone seeing him eat. He felt like they'd see through his barriers and see what a fuck up he was. How he scrambled to shove the food too quickly into his mouth. How the food never got more than a few inches from his face. How he held the dish like it would be grabbed from his hands. That's why he sat in one of the stalls eating. Thankfully, it was delicious even cold and Will finished it quickly. He then washed up at the sinks. He was delaying the inevitable. He'd eventually have to leave and go to his freezing car.

The closing announcement came on and Will stayed until the very last moment before walking out. He beelined to his car and climbed into the back seat, locking the doors behind him. He slung his backpack on the floor and took off his tennis shoes. He rolled on his extra pairs of socks praying they'd keep his feet warm. Then went about wrapping himself in his blankets. He thought they were warm in Louisiana, but here they felt paper thin. He shrugged the blankets tighter around himself. Pulling them over his head.

Add hat to the list.

After about five minutes of laying there crunched up in the back seat, Will began to shiver and he couldn't stop. It was so cold. He squeezed his eyes closed trying to think of what it felt to be warm, but he couldn't remember. His feet felt numb and his hands were stiff to move. He tried to shift his body, but the blankets caught him. He was wrapped so tightly. Will hated being trapped, because *He* had loved it. It was *his* favorite sadistic game. Trapping Will.

I can't stay here.

He sat up, wrestling the blankets away from his body. He shoved his socked feet into his shoes and climbed out of the car.

There wasn't any wind so the cold was just cold. Will began walking. Trying to get his blood pumping and moving through his body. He was exhausted, but he could sleep later. Right now, he had to move. He set a brisk pace not really caring where he wandered. He was out of the library parking lot and headed down a dark street. He wished there were places that were open all night he could go to.

You could go to a shelter... A voice in his mind said.

No. Fuck no . That's where *he* had found him the first time. There was no way Will was going to some self-righteous church-sanctioned shelter that let predators fund them. No way.

He continued walking. His anger and movement made him warm and he finally felt the heat in his fingers. He wandered off the road into a park. The darkened trees towered over him as he went on.

He didn't see the figures slowly creeping on him from behind until it was too late. A hand grabbed him, spinning him around only to be met by a fist to the face. Will went down hard. A boot kicked his stomach and he gasped trying to regain his breath.

There were two of them in dark hoodies. He tried to scramble away, but another kick sent him sprawling. Somebody knelt on him. Their knee dug painfully into his back, keeping him pinned to the ground. The other began sifting through his pockets. Will groaned and tried to fend them off but the man on top of him hit his head hard on the ground. Will couldn't hear for a moment. Just ringing. His hands fell listlessly to the ground. They found his wallet and keys. They kept looking for, Will assumed, a phone, but they had no luck.

Fucking bastards robbed a guy with nothing.

Eventually they got bored and left him after a few more kicks before running off, deeper into the park. Will laid on the pavement for a few moments not quite sure how to process it.

"Fuck," he groaned again. He managed to sit up, grabbing his ribs as they ached with hurt. He pressed on his sides tenderly, feeling for broken bones. Thankfully he didn't think any were broken, just bruised most likely.

He touched his temple where he had been punched and slammed on the ground. He was bleeding slightly. A cut just above his eye. The pavement must have scratched him. Seeing as he wasn't dead, he found no reason to stay on the ground in the park. He looked around nervously, afraid his attackers might pop up again. But the night was cold and empty. The park was barren.

Will numbly walked back from the park. Glancing behind his shoulder just in case the men followed him. He got back to the car only to realize he couldn't get in. He'd locked the doors before he left and they had stolen his keys. *Fuck.*

He pulled on the door handle praying it would somehow just open. It did not. He hit the car in frustration, the cold metal only stung his hands. He slid down the side of the car, collapsing beside the vehicle. He put his head in his hands and trembled as the cold pressed all around him.

"Fuck!" Will yelled, his words bounced across the empty parking lot. He wanted to hit something. Slam his fists on the cement, send his elbow through the glass window. Anything. But he didn't. He wiped his face with the back of his hand. It was wet with tears. Will glared angrily at the tears. At some point he must have started crying, but he didn't want to cry. He just wanted to be angry. He kicked his legs out, sending some nearby trash and gravel flying.

This is stupid, stop throwing a tantrum.

He hauled himself up, trying to think practically. He went to every door of the car and tried—all were locked. He then tried the windows. Trying to see if any would roll down just a little bit. They didn't budge.

He sighed sadly, looking mournfully at his blankets and backpack in the back seat. All his clothes. All his school notes. Hannibal's Tupperware.

The fucking Tupperware. It sent him over the edge. Angry and frustrated, he marched over to the side of the library building. He grabbed one of the landscaping rocks and limped back. With all his strength, he hefted the rock above his head and threw it with all his might at the back door's window. The window shattered as the rock went through.

Will carefully reached through the window, avoiding the broken shards still clinging to the window. He unlocked the door and opened it. Several pieces of glass fell on the pavement. Will carefully avoided them. He reached into the car and retrieved the Tupperware. He cradled it to his chest, he had to get it back to Hannibal, before it got broken or stolen. Or some other Will-tragedy befell it. He took his backpack, stuffing it with all his clothes and tooth brush and everything else he had lying around the car. He pulled the two blankets out. Shaking them carefully so all the glass would fall away. He then wrapped them around his shoulders and began walking back to campus.

As he walked, he clutched his side. It was painful to breathe and even more agony to walk. He eventually made it to campus. He collapsed on a bench outside the gym hidden a bit off the lighted sidewalk. He shrugged the blankets closer and pulled his legs to his chest. It would be a long night. Will knew he couldn't sleep, his brain trying to work out what to do. He couldn't go back to his car— not without fixing the window and getting the keys back. He didn't have a penny to his name. There was no way he could get a hotel room or anything. He seriously considered a shelter. But he pushed the thought away. He could survive on his own. He just needed to think more, something would come to him soon.

It falls into the sea

Hannibal placed the chicken salad with a freshly baked croissant in his locker. He winced at not having a fridge to place the food. He wanted the salad to be nice and fresh for Will. The finely chopped almonds richly added to the sweet crisp grapes mixed with the cold cream and chicken. He knew Will would appreciate the creamy chicken. He had noticed Will liked to cover his sandwiches in mayonnaise. Hannibal had hand whipped the mayo he used in the recipe— only the best for Will.

Will also liked to drench his sandwiches in Heinz ketchup, but Hannibal ignored the ketchup.

He smiled fondly thinking of his first time seeing Will eat. He seemed so anxious to eat but couldn't figure out how to wield the chopsticks correctly. Hannibal had taught him and, oh, the little smile that appeared when he did. His lips closing around the sushi roll in a moan of contentment. Hence, feeding Will Graham had become an increasingly pleasurable activity for Hannibal.

Entering the locker room, earlier than the rest of his team, he was surprised to see his Tupperware sitting casually on the bench he used while waiting for Will. He walked over and picked it up, it was definitely his and it was clean. Will must have left it for him. Hannibal couldn't help but pout at the missed opportunity to ask Will if he enjoyed it. Will would flush and stammer about before shoving the dish into his hands and scampering off like the little mongoose he was.

There also was no note, and Hannibal couldn't help but frown at how rude it was to leave his dish in the middle of a public locker room. But then again, it was the bench he always sat on to wait for Will. It meant Will trusted him to show up to receive it. Maybe the capricious mongoose would turn up later, after practice as he usually did.

Hannibal knew Will didn't come to the gym to workout. He was far too pale and thin to exert that much energy. No, his dear Will, used the shower and left. Hannibal assumed his dorm had communal showers which Will would avoid, being as private as he was. Hannibal didn't blame him, he hated showering with others, not that he was ashamed of his body or nakedness, but rather their lack of personal space. His teammates would brush up against him, their disgusting skin pressed against his. It wasn't sanitary.

Will must have dropped the dish off and would be back soon. Hannibal changed for practice and went off to join the team in the pool. When he returned, he was disappointed to find the shower empty. Will hadn't shown up this morning. Hannibal frowned, slipping into the shower.

Where was his mongoose?

Hannibal showered quickly and left for psychology. He was anxious to find Will. Maybe he had skipped showering today. But Will always appeared clean, even if his clothes were a bit worn and dirty. He wouldn't skip especially when he went out of his way to drop off the dishware. Unless...

Unless he was avoiding him.

Hannibal considered the last time he saw Will. He hadn't meant to be so demanding, but he really did want to cook for Will. Did he push too much? He knew he was infatuated with the man. Will was extremely smart, and he could read people so well. His empathy was not a negative to Hannibal, but rather something of boundless opportunity. If Will could empathize with anyone, might he understand Hannibal?

Hannibal hadn't voluntarily chosen to leave Italy. His aunt had given him an ultimatum. Leave or she would turn him in to the police. She had figured out his schemes when Hannibal had begun displaying his prey. Hannibal had tried to explain to her that he was creating art from these pigs, but she did not listen.

Maybe Will would.

He wasn't about to kill anyone in front of Will. In fact, he hadn't killed anyone since he arrived in America. Not that he didn't want to: he had a list. His aunt hadn't forbid him from killing, but she had been quite clear, she would cut him off if he ever got caught. The family name would not be blemished. Maybe he could gradually show himself to Will and maintain his freedom and good name. It had to be possible.

He arrived at psychology a few minutes early. Beverly was already there, typing frantically on her laptop. She was a tolerable person, mainly because Will seemed to enjoy her company. Otherwise, she was a bit loud and obnoxious for his tastes.

"Have you seen Will?" Hannibal asked her.

Beverly didn't bother looking up from her laptop, "No, he sent me his presentation last night. Jeez, how did he finish so fast?"

"You're not done," Hannibal surmised. If it was dignified to roll his eyes, he would.

"Just. Finishing. The. Last. Bit," She stabbed the enter key rather hard, "There, all done!"

"Good, now do you know where Will is? He didn't show up this morning."

Beverly raised her eyebrows, "Y'all didn't shower together this morning?"

Hannibal bristled, "We don't shower *together* ."

Beverly raised her hands, "Ok, Ok, Ok. So, he didn't show up this morning? Big deal, he was probably sleeping or maybe finishing his paper. You should calm down."

"I am calm," Hannibal huffed.

Beverly nodded, a smirk decorating her features, "Sure. Hannibal Lecter's calm and cool. Just missing his boyfriend."

"He's not my—" Hannibal caught her teasing look and huffed, "Oh shut up Katz, you're being insufferable. I'm just worried about him."

"That's really cute," Beverly grinned.

Hannibal scowled at her, "It's not cute."

But Beverly wasn't paying attention to him anymore, her gaze pinned to something in the front of the room as a look of concern passed her face, "Why is he wearing that dirty hoodie?"

Hannibal followed her gaze. Sure enough there was his mongoose shuffling towards them. His hoodie was dirty with dirt staining the sleeves and front. His arms were crossed tightly across his chest. His hood was pulled over his head and his hair fell into his face. He kept his eyes trained on the floor so neither Hannibal nor Beverly could see his face.

Hannibal darted forward, trying to wrap his arm around Will to guide him to their table, but Will flinched away. Hannibal paused his motion and decided it best to trail behind Will instead, even though his hands itched to touch. Something was very wrong with Will.

Will slumped into his chair, before resting his head on the table and drawing his arms on to the table to cover his head. Hannibal and Beverly exchanged looks. Will was always rather shy, but this was something completely different.

Hannibal sat down beside Will, trying to move as gently as possible so as not to disturb him. Beverly reached out hesitantly and placed her hand on his back. Will flinched subtly but Beverly didn't move away. Hannibal wanted to rip her hand off of him.

"Will, what's wrong?" Beverly asked.

Will shrugged and rasped from the table, "Tired."

Beverly nodded, her hand slowly making circles on his back, "Do you want to go?"

Will shook his head and grunted, "Presentation."

Beverly frowned at Hannibal and mouthed, *what the fuck?* Hannibal shook his head, just as clueless as her. He had no idea why Will was acting like this. They didn't have much time to think about it because the professor entered and the class began presentations.

Hannibal gave his. His mind was not on the task, the whole time he was trying to catch a glimpse of Will's eyes. But the downcast man would not raise his head. He finished his presentation and there was a polite applause as Hannibal hurried back to his seat. Back to Will.

Will hadn't even clapped for him. He got back to his desk and leaned close to Will, "Would you like to leave? You seem ill."

"After," was all Will responded. At least he had answered. A few more students went and Hannibal was anxiously waiting for class to finish so he could sweep Will away. They were going to sit down and talk about exactly what was bothering him.

Finally Will's name was called and he shuffled up to the front with Beverly's laptop. He set up and finally turned to the professor to indicate he was ready.

But the professor frowned, gesturing to Will's clothes, "Mr. Graham. You are in a university level class, I expect you to take some consideration into your dress."

A few students snickered and Hannibal memorized their faces so he could kill them later.

Will's shoulders sagged, "I'm sorry, I'll do better next time."

"You can start by taking off your hood. No one can see your face. Is this how you want to present yourself to your peers?"

"No, sir," Will mumbled under his breath.

"Then take the hood off," the professor demanded.

Will's hand trembled as he raised it. Hannibal eyes were glued on Will's pale knuckles. Were they bruised?

There was a collective gasp as Will revealed his face.

*

Will wanted to crawl into a hole and die. God, he must look like some Picasso painting with the way the students gaped at him.

When the gym had finally opened in the morning, Will had hurried to the locker room to clean himself. It was so early the only people in the gym were the employees. When he looked in the mirror he hardly recognized himself. He was deathly pale, but a good portion of his face was bruised badly. He had had a black eye before, but this looked like he had gotten hit by a truck. There was also a gash on his temple. There was a lot of blood now dried on his face, but the wound itself was small. He had grabbed a bunch of paper towels and begun dabbing at his face slowly cleaning himself from the grime.

He didn't want to take his clothes off for a shower after finally getting warm in the building's heat. So, he had left Hannibal's dish on the bench where the man normally sat and stuffed his blankets in an unused locker. He promised himself he would return for them before nightfall. He had made his way to the school library where he immediately curled up on the floor of an empty study room and fell asleep. He had only just woken up a bit ago to rush over to class.

He had kept his hood up around the school. Guarding his face from the outsiders. No one could know. But now it seemed pointless as the professor ordered him to take it off. He did so reluctantly, the anger beginning to boil in his belly at the professor. He turned and pointedly glared at the man, showing him the full extent of the damage.

The professor visibly swallowed, "Mr. Graham, are you alr—"

"Yes," Will interrupted curtly, "I'd like to start my presentation if you don't mind."

Will turned back to the class and quickly started speaking, but it didn't matter what he said, not a single person was paying him any attention. Their eyes were roaming his face. The nasty purple bruise and the still bloody gash. There were murmurs throughout the room. Will clear his throat continuing to speak clearly though his voice was dry and rough.

"As you can see here, there is an outer and inner circle amongst this group pictured. The two girls are central in the group speaking together while their collection of friends draw around them. They feed off the attention and the outer group feeds off the proximity to their ideal."

Will paused speaking. The class was still noisy with whispers. He glanced nervously at Hannibal. He didn't know why, but it was comforting. Hannibal didn't seem in shock at his appearance. Just a bit of worry flickering in his eyes, but he was nodding encouragingly, so Will continued.

"The question is, then, would the inner circle be the center without the outer group? Without the pushing inward? Is their gravity their's or just a happenstance orbit. Will their followers leave them when a larger object flies near? Or will they just attract a new crowd?"

A few people had pulled out their phones and were quickly taking pictures of Will standing vulnerably at the front. Will flinched when a flash went off in his direction. *Turn off the fucking flash.* He looked down. He had more to say, but he was frustrated and the flash had thrown him off. He couldn't seem to think of what he wanted to conclude with. He stumbled over his words, "So... So, yeah. That's all. Thank you."

He grabbed Beverly's laptop and hurried back to his seat. He handed Beverly the laptop before pulling his hood once more over his head.

"I'm going to go," He whispered to his friends. He couldn't bear being in this place for one more minute. All the eyes. All the attention, the questions, the pity.

Beverly began slinging her bag on too, "Ok, let's go."

"No!" Will shook his head, "You stay here."

"Will, I'm not staying here, we need to take you to a hospital or something." Beverly frowned.

"No. I just need to be alone— and look, you still have your presentation. So you can't go. So yeah. I'm going."

With his backpack, he hastened out of the class. He took a deep breath once he was away from all the people, collecting himself before starting off. But a hand grabbed his wrist and he was pulled back. Hannibal stood before him. His face was blank and he just stared. He didn't seem angry or worried. Just blank.

"What?" Will asked defensively, twisting his wrist away from Hannibal. Hannibal didn't try to hold on and let his wrist free to Will's relief.

Hannibal's mouth dipped into a small frown. "Are you going to a hospital?"

Will scowled, turning quickly away without answering. No, he was not going to a hospital. They'd ask too many questions. He started off again.

Hannibal caught up quickly to him to his annoyance, but he didn't try to grab him again. Instead he spoke seriously, "Will, I think you should—"

Will stopped suddenly spinning on the man, "What!? What do *you* think I should do?"

Hannibal stepped back surprised at Will's venom, "I didn't— All I meant to say, is do you need a ride to the hospital?"

Will huffed and spun on his heel once more. Hannibal was infuriating. But he kept following him, though a few steps behind now. Probably afraid Will would round on him with an uppercut to his jaw. Will was considering it, flexing his hand menacingly.

"Will?" Hannibal spoke softly.

"What?" Will rounded on him once more, "Can't you just leave me alone!"

"No," Hannibal replied evenly.

"Why don't you just fuck off!" Will shouted.

"I'm not going to leave you in this state." Hannibal eyed Will's face critically and raised his hand to cup Will's jaw.

Will batted the hand away, a touch too hard as his hand made a loud slap when it met Hannibal's arm. Hannibal stepped back. Will immediately felt guilty. He looked away, muttering, "Don't touch me."

Hannibal apologized, "I'm sorry"

Will scoffed, "Whatever."

There was a beat. Hannibal didn't move to touch him again, but Will felt bad. He kept his eyes down not wanting to talk, but feeling terrible for smacking Hannibal's touch away.

"You don't want to go to the hospital," Hannibal surmised after a moment.

"No, I don't."

"Then we won't. But can we at least treat the cut?"

"I cleaned it," Will muttered waving absently at his gash.

"I see," Hannibal answered, clearly not believing Will. "But I have antibiotics to put on it as well as gauze and bandages. You don't want an open cut when you go to work. They might send you home."

Will scowled. More to cover his own panic than to show his anger. He hadn't thought about his jobs. They were already giving him a chance. What if he fucked it? Scaring away customers because of his discolored face. Would they fire him?

"You have all that shit?" Will asked, trying to sound casual and not betray the fear mounting in his chest.

Hannibal smiled, "I am a medical student. Hopefully I've learned enough to keep a decent first aid kit."

Will huffed and crossed his arms, but said nothing more. He didn't want to concede to Hannibal, but the man was probably right. He should get the wound covered for his job's sake.

"Fine."

Hannibal smiled and turned, gesturing for Will to follow him. Will dragged his feet, but followed the older student from the building.

“My car isn’t too far.” Hannibal said as he walked towards the campus parking lot.

“Don’t you live on campus?”

“No, I have an apartment off-campus. It’s a short walk, but it’s rather cold.”

Will nodded, thankful to be out of the cold as soon as possible. Hannibal had a warm looking overcoat on, but Will just had his weatherworn hoodie he’d been in all night. He wondered how much a coat like Hannibal’s would cost. Probably a fortune. He wondered momentarily of asking if Hannibal had any extra coats he’d let him have.

His brain quickly shut that thought down. *You’re not some charity case. Stop looking for handouts.*

Hannibal gestured to a silver Bentley in the parking lot, Will had to keep from gasping in astonishment. How rich was Hannibal? He had an apartment and a nice car, what else did this rich European have? Will’s concept of rich was much more moderate. It included buying frozen meals, candy in the queuing aisle, and filling up a whole tank of gas in one go. Simple luxuries he dreamed of not worrying about one day.

He slid into the front seat beside Hannibal who wasted no time in turning the engine on for warmth. *The car had god damn seat warmers.* He nervously fidgeted in the seat. He somehow felt his presence was making the nice leather seats filthy. That he was somehow staining Hannibal’s fancy ass car. He spared a glance at Hannibal sitting regally in the driver seat. He wondered if the man could tell he didn’t belong. Hannibal seemed to sense Will’s discomfort and glanced over.

“Are you alright?”

Will scoffed bitterly, “Do you think I’m alright?”

Hannibal’s mouth turned down, but all he responded with was “Please let me know if you get too warm.”

Will crossed his arms stiffly. Pressing himself into the seat, as if to disappear in its warm leather. They soon arrived at Hannibal's apartment, which was definitely not an apartment. It was a whole townhouse. Will scoffed at it, calling out Hannibal for his bullshit. “That’s a house, not an apartment.”

Hannibal shrugged and (*very smugly*) smirked, “It’s a part of a building and therefore an apartment.”

Will rolled his eyes, but couldn’t help a small smile from crossing his face.

Hannibal unlocked the door. It was beautiful inside. Wood paneled floors covered in Persian carpets. The house's interior was dark but cozy. Hannibal slid his shoes off and Will followed suit, trying to ignore how the caked mud on his boots crumbled off onto the floor.

Hannibal didn't seem to notice or he was ignoring it as he lead Will deeper into the house. Will spotted a library, a sitting room, a study. They finally made it to a kitchen with shiny stainless steel appliances and countertops. It was clinically clean and yet Will could tell this was the heart of Hannibal’s home.

The man moved with ease around the space. More relaxed than Will had seen him before. Hannibal pulled a box from one of the cabinets and gestured for Will to follow him again. They made their way back from the kitchen. Winding through the halls until they came back to the sitting room. Will couldn’t help but miss the kitchen, it was a vulnerable place for Hannibal, something close to his person. And if Will had to be vulnerable, he wanted to pry open Hannibal the same way. It was only fair.

They sat together on the couch. Hannibal placed the kit on the coffee table and began unpacking the supplies. Will fidgeted nervously as he watched Hannibal’s hands unroll a gauze strip.

His jaw clenched at the sight. He hated seeing the wrappings. They always reminded him of wrapping the injuries *he* gave him. The scratches and bruises that had to be hidden by band aids and bandages; Long sleeves and hoodies.

Hannibal touched his knee. “Will?”

Will jumped slightly, frowning, “What?”

Hannibal smiled, reaching for the antiseptic and pouring it onto a pad, “Can I touch you?”

Will scowled more, but Hannibal didn’t seem phased by his mood. He shifted ever so slightly closer to Hannibal with a huff, “Fine.”

Hannibal chuckled, “You’re filled with so many words today.”

“Fuck off,” Will muttered though he didn’t really mean it.

Hannibal’s smile grew more, “So rude.”

Will’s defenses melted as Hannibal gently took his chin in hand. Tipping his face up towards Hannibal. His other hand coming and dabbing the medicine softly on Will’s forehead. Will winced as the medicine stung, but he didn’t move. He knew it was better to get it cleaned than risk infection. He was distracted from the pain as he felt Hannibal softly stroking his jaw. His eyes flickered up to the man’s but Hannibal was wholly focused on the wound. Will quickly dropped his eyes to his hands which were nervously twisting in his lap.

Hannibal set down the pad, it was stained with a bit of pink.

“Is it bleeding again?” Will asked as his hand went up to touch it.

Hannibal grabbed his hand before he could, “Don’t touch it. You’ll only make it bleed more.”

Will frowned but dropped his hand back to his lap.

“You know, if you keep frowning like that, your skin won’t be able to heal properly,” Hannibal teased.

“Maybe I want a frown on my face.” Will shot back.

Hannibal took some tape and bandages. He was leaning so close that Will could smell his aftershave. It smelled salty with something smoky behind it— cedar? Pine? Will wasn’t sure, but it did smell good on the man.

“It makes my job easier if you weren’t scowling so much,” Hannibal said lightly, and Will couldn’t help but stare at the way his adam’s apple bobbed when he spoke so close. His creased forehead lessened as his stared enthralled with the man’s neck. Hannibal taped the bandages in place.

“There. Not so bad at all,” Hannibal leaned back to survey his work, nodding in approval. Will’s hand once more went up to touch it, but Hannibal caught his hand again, “You shouldn’t mess with the wound, Will.”

Will huffed, jerking his hand from Hannibal’s grip, “Whatever. It’ll probably need to be changed again anyway.”

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed, standing, “But until then, let it heal. I’m going to go get some ice for the bruises. Would you like any pain medicine?”

“Got any of the good stuff?” Will half-joked thinking about how lovely a joint or a line would be at this moment. *He* always had a variety of fun substances for Will to try. Drugs and

alcohol had always made things more bearable.

Hannibal raised his eyebrows, looking rather stern, “I have advil and tylenol.”

Will sighed. Hannibal either was no fun or too concerned about Will’s health to give him anything other than prescribed medicine. “I’ll take some advil.”

Hannibal disappeared and returned a moment later with an ice pack, glass of water, and a bottle of pills. He set them on the table in front of Will. Will took the medicine, gulping down the water and pill. He hadn’t realized how thirsty he was. Hannibal came and sat beside him again.

“Now,” Hannibal said, “Are you hurt anywhere else?”

“No,” Will lied quickly. There was no way he was allowing Hannibal to see his back or chest. Better to lie.

“Are you sure?” Hannibal asked, clearly not believing him.

“I’m fucking fine, Hannibal,” Will replied curtly.

“Will you tell me what happened then?”

Will breathed in sharply. He knew that question was coming and he’d been considering his answer since Hannibal had grabbed his hand outside of class.

“I fell.”

Hannibal's eyebrows rose, "Then you are most definitely hurt elsewhere. Do you have any other scrapes? Did you land on your shoulder or—"

"I landed on my face," Will cut in. He knew it was rude and a rather stupid lie. But if he told him that he was mugged then Hannibal would demand going to the police or ask where. And then one way or another, he'd find out that Will was homeless.

Will expected the man to get frustrated and start yelling, but Hannibal just sighed and looked sadly away, "I can't help you if you're lying to me."

"But— I'm not!" Will insisted, but even his own voice lacked the conviction.

"Will, it's alright," Hannibal placated, "I'm not going to force you to tell me."

Will quieted, biting the inside of his cheek. He was relieved but he also felt terrible. Hannibal was just trying to help him after all. *Why can't you just be honest for once?*

"Here," Hannibal held out a blanket to him, "I'm going to work on some papers and then cook dinner. Why don't you rest here and then if you want to leave or talk, you can. Ok?"

Will tentatively reached out and took the blanket. "Ok," He whispered softly.

Hannibal nodded and strode out of the sitting room, closing the door on his way out. Will fell backwards on the couch, bringing his legs up on the soft sofa. He brought the folded blanket up to cover his face.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," Will hissed into the fabric folds. Why did his life have to be so damn hard? He sighed allowing himself a few more moments of self pity, before trying to think clearly. Obviously the couch was much more comfortable than the floor of a study room. Maybe he could rest for a while in comfort and warmth? Just this once.

Will spread the blanket out, cocooning his body in the warmth. He would just close his eyes for a second and then he'd leave.

Down to the depths

Will woke when a gentle hand touched his shoulder. He jumped, his fight or flight immediately initiated. He hated being surprised. He hated being unaware. Thankfully there wasn't any threat, just Hannibal looking down at him curiously. Will scowled, shoving the blanket off and rubbing his eyes. He glared accusatively at Hannibal, "What?"

Hannibal chuckled, "Remind me not to wake you again. You don't seem to like being woken."

"I don't like surprises." Will hissed.

"I apologize for the intrusion," Hannibal replied genuinely, "I didn't realize you had fallen so fast asleep. But dinner is ready if you'd like to eat."

Will perked up at the mention of food. "Yeah, sure, thanks."

"There is a condition," Hannibal said solemnly.

Will narrowed his eyes. Nothing good ever came from conditions. He'd rather go hungry. He tried to stay open minded though. Hannibal hadn't done anything yet, right? "What?" he asked warily.

"You have to call Beverly. She has been hounding me all afternoon. She has accused me of kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, and treason of friendship among other things," Hannibal explained with a quirk of his lips, obviously amused.

Will couldn't help but smile. It felt good to know Beverly was looking out for him even in her over enthusiastic way. He nodded, "Sure, I'll call her. Can I use your phone?"

Hannibal handed him his phone, "I'll be in the kitchen setting the plates. You can meet me in the dining room when you're finished. It's next to the kitchen, do you remember where?"

"I have a cut on my head, not a concussion. I remember," Will replied.

Hannibal nodded, "Alright then, I will see you there, hopefully you like meat."

"I do," Will answered, "And thanks for everything...It means a lot."

Hannibal nodded, "Anything you need. Just ask."

Will felt butterflies dancing in his stomach and his cheeks turning red. He ducked his head, mumbling a quick, "Thanks" as Hannibal left the room. He didn't like how his heart was reacting. He needed to get himself sorted. He dialed Beverly who picked up on the first ring

"Put Will on or I'm calling the police!"

That made Will laugh, "Bev, it's me."

"Oh Jesus, Will. Thank God. You and Hannibal disappeared off the face of the earth. Don't do that again!"

"Sorry, Hannibal was helping me. We're at his place."

There was a little ooh from Beverly over the phone, "Is it nice? I heard he doesn't live on campus. Does he have a mansion and a butler?"

"Haven't seen a butler, but I wouldn't be surprised. I'm almost certain I saw a whole samurai outfit in the hall, but I might have been dreaming."

Beverly whistled, "He's loaded. You gotta bag that."

Will bristled. He didn't like that insinuation. "Where did the: 'I'm going to call the police' go?"

"I was teasing Will, I know you're just friends," Beverly said with a long-suffering sigh then laughed, "But if he ever starts handing out stacks of money, remember me!"

Will rolled his eyes, but he couldn't help but smile. Beverly was ridiculous. "Fine. But I'm charging interest."

"Ah, you're killing me man!" Beverly joked, but her voice turned somber, "But seriously Will, are you alright?"

"Yeah."

"What happened? It looked like you went 5 rounds with a rhino."

"Poor rhino," Will said sarcastically.

"No, poor you. You can't keep coming to school looking completely beat up and expect nobody to say anything."

Nobody said anything in high school. He pushed the thought away. He was safe. No one was going to hurt him and he had friends. Weird, but genuine friends.

If they're your friends, why are you lying to them?

Shut up!

He sighed, "I tripped and fell on the sidewalk. There was a step. I banged my head pretty badly."

"Do you have a concussion? Are you dizzy? You really should go to a hospital." Beverly worried.

"Nah, just bruising and the cut. The cut makes it look worse than it is."

"It looks pretty bad on its own. Are you sure you don't want to go to the hospital? I know Hannibal is a medical student, but he's not a doctor."

"I'm aware."

"Then why don't you go?!"

"It's not needed. Look, I gotta go. Hannibal made food, I don't want to be rude and take up any more of his time."

"You're not being rude Will, you're our friend. You can talk to us. You can talk to me."

"I know," Will agreed lamely, then to avoid any other conversation, he quickly added, "Bye Bev. See you tomorrow."

"Will—"

He hung up and looked down at the phone. He felt bad. But he had to keep them at arm's length. If they got any closer they'd see him. They'd know what happened.

He walked to the dining room. Hannibal was flitting around the table putting dishes down and messing with the utensils. Will stood in the doorway watching the man as he fixed a spoon that wasn't perfectly straight. He seemed nervous. It was endearing to watch. He cleared his throat.

Hannibal immediately turned, looking surprised and happy, "Will. I didn't hear you. Did you talk to Beverly?"

"Yeah, I assured her you didn't kidnap me," Will stepped hesitantly into the room.

"Good," Hannibal said with a big grin. He gestured at a seat by the head of the table, "Come, come sit. I've made duck. Hopefully you like it."

"I've only eaten duck once," Will answered. Coming into the room and taking his seat by the head of the table. Hannibal stood behind his chair and pushed it in when he sat down. Will felt his face flushing. At this point, Hannibal could just look at him and Will would turn into a blushing mess.

"I enjoy duck," Hannibal explained as he served Will a plate, "When I was young I'd often go waterfowl hunting with my father. It's a good sport, especially in the European countryside."

Will looked at the sizzling piece of meat. It was garnished with small purple flowers and had little orange flecks aesthetically placed. It smelled delicious. He moaned, "It looks so good."

"Hopefully it tastes just as well," Hannibal said with a smile, taking his fork and knife up, "Tell me about your first and only duck experience."

"Ah, it's kinda a funny story," Will enjoyed thinking back on it. Before his mom had left, things had been good. At least, he only remembered the good parts. His mom took him for long walks, buying him candy, and going to the dog park so he could watch the animals play. It had been nice before.

“It was the holidays, and my mom was gonna do the whole Christmas turkey thing, but she was notorious for waiting until the very last minute. So the time comes and she’s rushing around trying to find a store that is open and not out of turkeys. Anyways, she couldn’t, so we had duck instead.”

Hannibal looked enraptured by the story, “How old were you?”

Will shrugged picking up his utensils, “I dunno, like 5 or 6?”

“Did you like it?”

“All I remember was it being so greasy. I got it all over my clothes, they were permanently stained with all the duck grease.”

Hannibal laughed and reached across Will’s plate taking his napkin. He opened it with a flourish and held it out to Will, “Let’s not repeat past experience, no?”

Will found himself laughing as he took the offered napkin, “What? Don’t want to see me covered in grease?”

“It’s tempting,” Hannibal said with a sly tip to his head, “But I must say, I’d rather see you covered in *other* substances.”

Will choked and looked down. *He did not just fucking say that.* His face must have been scarlet. *Hannibal was definitely hitting on him. Yes? Substances? That meant—fuck, that meant—Hannibal was making innuendoes, flirting. That was definitely happening right now.* He quickly began cutting into the meat. His hands felt clammy.

The silence was growing long and Will couldn’t help but feel like it was his fault. He was the one that turned awkward. Hannibal was just trying to be fun. God, he was so smooth and

charming like a fucking swan preening for attention. Will felt like a duck: waddling and floundering in the water until a hunter comes and shoots him and cooks him for dinner.

He stared at the food before him. Feeling rather sick after empathizing with the poor animal. He put his fork and knife down, his hands were shaking, he realized.

"I apologize, Will," Hannibal's voice broke the silence. Will glanced at him. The man had also set his utensils down and was studying him carefully. He looked worried, "I didn't mean to cause you any stress."

Will looked back at him stricken. He hated that Hannibal could see him vulnerable, but something about the way Hannibal held his gaze made him stay quiet.

"I blame the Italian culture. They are very forward with their advances, I had assumed Americans were similar. I'm sorry."

"It's ok," Will said weakly.

"No, it's not. I've obviously made you uncomfortable."

Will shrugged unhappily. He wished he were comfortable. He wished he was fine. He knew he could force himself to smile. To even flirt back, but it would be fake. Will liked Hannibal, He didn't want to be fake around him.

"It doesn't matter," Will mumbled. He picked up his fork once more, but looking at the meat made him a bit queasy. It felt like he was the duck. Greasy, floundering, stupid, dead duck.

"It does matter," Hannibal said gently, as he surveyed Will's face. "You've lost your appetite."

Will laughed bitterly, "I'm hungry, but it's not your fault. I was just thinking about how I'm like a duck and now I'm eating a duck and it feels wrong. It's stupid, my empathy is not even

letting me eat in peace. Does that even make sense?"

"Yes," Hannibal answered immediately, before suddenly standing up, "Come I have some excellent duck and human food in the kitchen. We'll find you something to eat."

Will smiled now, Hannibal was charming. And he didn't seem afraid of Will's empathy. *What a relief.* He followed Hannibal into the kitchen. The man was pulling out food from the fridge and pulling it on the counter. Glass containers, holding rice, puddings, meats, were all emptied on the counter.

Will giggled at how much Hannibal had amassed in such a short time. Hannibal shot him an amused look back, "Now does something in here catch your eye? I can also make you food, whatever you'd like."

"Do you have peanut butter and jelly?"

Hannibal blinked at him before bursting out laughing, "I have lamb, escargot, any food you could imagine, but the mongoose wants peanut butter and jelly."

Will grinned, "You said anything I'd like."

"My, you are a monster," Hannibal reached over and ruffled his hair. Will, *very proudly*, didn't flinch.

Hannibal, it turns out, didn't have peanut butter or jelly and spent a better part of an hour grinding peanuts into a smooth creamy texture. And then he went mad crushing grapes and various berries he had on hand, even dumping them in a saucepan to cook them down into jelly. Will eventually told him enough, "I'll have a peanut butter sandwich at this point and be happy."

"Are you sure?" Hannibal asked doubtfully.

“Yes,” Will laughed gesturing to the bubbling concoction Hannibal had brewing on the stove, “I don’t think that is even remotely edible.”

Hannibal gasped in mock disdain, “But, my dear mongoose, it’s your beloved jelly.”

“It’s boiled fruit, please stop making it. Don’t you have honey or something you can put on my sandwich instead?”

Hannibal relented and turned off the oven, “I do have honey. But I need to toast the bread first.”

“But I’m hungry!” Will pouted.

“Patience,” Hannibal scolded as he pulled out an artisan bread loaf that made Will roll his eyes. If only Hannibal tried American white bread– filled with delicious additives and processed sugars. *It might kill the man.* Finally, his sandwich was done, and Hannibal slid him the plate holding the fanciest peanut butter sandwich Will had seen in his life. It had only taken forever for Hannibal to make. Will picked up one of the halves (because, of course, Hannibal halved it) and shoved half of it into his mouth before Hannibal decided he wasn’t happy with it.

It was delicious (or maybe he was hungry) and Will moaned around his mouthful, loving the flavors bursting in his mouth. He scarfed down one and then took the other half.

“Th-e e we-ly-oo,” Will explained with his mouthful.

“Come again?” Hannibal asked teasingly.

“This is really good,” Will repeated after swallowing.

"Good, only the best for you."

"If the best takes hours to make, I'd rather have something else." Will took another huge bite out of the sandwich.

Hannibal pouted looking down at his watch, "Hardly hours, it's just now close to ten."

Will swallowed hard, "Ten?"

"Yes, well to be more precise, It's 9:45."

"Shit," Will dropped the rest of the sandwich on the plate. He hadn't realized how late it had become. He stood abruptly and quickly made his way to the door. The gym closed at ten. If he missed the closing time, his blankets would be locked in. He shivered just thinking about how cold it had gotten last night. He needed those blankets or else he'd freeze. *Fuck, I need those blankets!*

"Will?" Hannibal worriedly followed him. Having to jog just to keep up, "Will, what's the matter?"

"The gym—" Will tried to explain while he shoved his feet into his muddy boots.

"What about it?"

"It closes at ten!" Will exclaimed desperately, "I left something in the lockers."

"Surely you can grab whatever you left tomorrow?" Hannibal tried to reason.

"I need it now!" Will snapped, growing frustrated.

"Let me drive you," Hannibal reached for his coat.

"No!" Will stomped his foot sending caked mud flying across Hannibal's entry. If Hannibal saw his ratty blankets, he'd ask questions or worse put it together on his own. Will could not let the man know. Will sighed, biting his lip, "I'm sorry. I just— I need to go. Thanks for everything, but I gotta go."

Hannibal stared after him as he darted out of the door. The cold hit him hard as he made down the road. He shivered and clutched his arms around him, knowing he'd need the blankets to make it through the night. He wasn't far from the campus and walked quickly towards the gym.

Please, please don't be closed , he prayed as he hurried.

*

Hannibal stared after Will as he practically ran down the house's steps and disappeared down the street. He closed the door, utterly confused. It was like the clock had struck twelve and the princess fled the ball. Except there was no glass slipper left for Hannibal to find his prize. Will was gone with a blink of an eye, leaving Hannibal grasping for strings. Hannibal refused to give in. Will was making it quite difficult, but Hannibal would not be deterred. He grabbed his coat and ventured out of the door.

He followed after Will, a good distance behind, so as not to arouse his mongoose's suspicion. He walked silently in the shadows, keeping his eyes trained on Will's journey. The young man, he saw, was now limping slightly and clutching his side in pain as he moved. Anger boiled in Hannibal's blood, why was Will so insistent on lying to him? Why did he say he was not hurt when he obviously was in pain?

Hannibal scowled as Will disappeared through the gym's glass doors, now running to gather whatever he left at the gym. The gym attendant glared and shouted as he rushed by him. It was nearly 10 now. Hannibal assumed whatever Will needed related to school, maybe a project or a paper.

But there, Will emerged once more carrying in his arms a bundle of laundry. It was so odd, Will carrying a pile of rags. Hannibal lost his annoyance immediately. His curiosity peaked seeing Will's arms filled. Why on earth did he need those? Once Will was outside the gym doors, he paused, shaking out the bundle. Hannibal realized they were blankets as Will wrapped them around his shoulders and hurried off.

Blankets? Of all the things to worry about leaving in a gym, a blanket seemed the most ridiculous. Will was such an odd creature.

Hannibal was determined to discover why the mongoose was obsessed with blankets and followed him at once.

He had assumed Will would make for the parking lot for his car, but he veered away from the car lot and made his way off campus. Perhaps Will lived close, like Hannibal? But after a good ten minutes walking, Will had not slowed his pace nor turned towards any residential areas. In fact, the more they walked, the seedier the area became. Hannibal was beginning to become nervous for Will. He was still walking quickly but he seemed unaware of his surroundings. Anyone could sneak up on him. And in this part of town, there were plenty of rowdy youth and despicable gangs wandering about looking for someone like Will.

Hannibal breathed a sigh of relief when Will finally swerved off the main road into a parking lot. It was a public library, but it was closed and the parking lot empty.

Nearly empty, Hannibal corrected himself, as he saw Will approach a battered looking car. It was parked at the back of the lot, hidden well behind a dumpster. One of the back windows was shattered, but Will looked neither surprised nor concerned by that fact. Instead the mongoose clambered into the front seat and slammed the door closed.

Why was his mongoose so worried over blankets? Why had he parked his car so far away from campus? Why here in an empty lot? Why was the window shattered? Hannibal expected none of his questions would be answered when Will drove away, leaving Hannibal alone in the darkness. But the car didn't start. Was something wrong? Hannibal stepped closer. Will was sitting in the front seat, but he was collapsed on the steering wheel. His head was in his hands and his shoulders were moving up and down as he— Hannibal heard it now— cried softly.

Hannibal couldn't stop himself, he saw Will in distress and needed to help him. He strode up to the driver's window and rapped hard on the glass. Will gave a startled cry and scrambled towards the passenger side.

"Will, it's me," Hannibal stated loudly, breaking the cold silence of the night.

Will buried his head in his blankets, "Go away!"

"Will—"

"I said, go away!" Will shouted, but Hannibal could see his face glaring at him from under the covers. His Will was absolutely ferocious yet his face was covered in tears. Hannibal jerked the door open, and slid inside the car much to Will's disdain.

"Get out, Hannibal!" Will shouted as he emerged from the blankets. His eyes were hard and he was angrily blinking away his tears, "I don't want you here! Get out!"

"No," Hannibal said evenly. He closed the door behind him, locking Will and himself in the car.

"Hannibal," Will said in a quiet, commanding voice. He sat up staring seriously at the man, "Please leave me alone."

"Are you living here?" Hannibal asked, ignoring Will. He was glancing curiously around the interior of the car. It was filled with trash, there were clothes spewed around, and a large map covering the front dash.

"Hannibal, get out—"

"Are you living in your car?" Hannibal repeated. Will was not going to push him away this time.

"That's none of your business," Will spat vehemently.

"Will, I'm trying to help you. Are you living here?"

"I don't want your help!" Will stated furiously, but Hannibal could see his eyes watering. His mongOOSE was about to snap.

"Will, it's alright, I don't care if you don't want my help. I'm here and I will help you no matter what, just tell me."

Will fought back his tears, bravely staring Hannibal down. A few traitorous tears slipped out.

"No," Will gasped, trying to contain his emotions.

Hannibal soothed, "Just tell me what's going on."

"No..." Will choked. But the dam burst and a flow of tears began. Will broke Hannibal's gaze, covering his face as he couldn't contain the sob. He turned away from Hannibal, hiding his face.

Hannibal wrapped his arm around the young man, he seemed so fragile and thin. He pulled Will to his chest, the young man offered no fight, slumping into his embrace. Hannibal held him tightly as he let him sob into his shirt. Hannibal stroked his hair. "Shh, you're alright. You're ok now, everything will be ok."

Will's sobs ceased eventually, and Hannibal was afraid Will would pull away, determined to be angry as a defense. He could see that now, why Will fought so hard against him: he was scared. The fear made him reactive. Thankfully, no second bout of anger came. It seemed

Will was content at the moment sniffing quietly into Hannibal's chest. Hannibal could tell it was another form of defense as well: hiding. Delaying facing Hannibal with the truth.

Hannibal bent his head down, nosing Will's curls. "My," he whispered, "what a magnificent creature you are."

Will hiccuped and his little mongoose shifted revealing big blue eyes. They were red from crying and his cheeks were stained with tears. Hannibal wanted to lead down and kiss him, but he stayed himself instead running his hand along his cheek. "There you are, Will."

Will just stared at him and Hannibal continued to gently stroke his cheek on the unbruised side of his face. When he next spoke, it was slow and deliberate, so as to not frighten Will. "You cannot stay here."

Will frowned but he said nothing. Hannibal took that as a positive and continued, "I won't ask you why you are living in your car, I hope you will eventually tell me, but until then, you can stay with me."

Will opened his mouth to argue.

But Hannibal silenced him, "You're going to stay with me, or I will get you a hotel room. Whichever you prefer. You are not staying in this car, nor god forbid wandering the streets."

"You can't do that--"

"I can do anything I'd like," Hannibal said sternly.

Will bristled, pushing away from him, his eyes once more fiery with indignation, "You can't. I can live where I want."

"I'm quite certain you don't want to live here," Hannibal rebuffed.

Will huffed, “You don’t know what I want.”

“Maybe not, but *I* want you to be safe. Tell me, were you accosted walking around here or in your car?” Will glared at him but didn’t say the contrary. The silence was enough. He was right then, Will had been attacked. Hannibal sighed, not wanting to push him too much. Instead he asked a different question. “Are you aware your shelter has a gaping hole in the window?”

“Yes,” Will said petulantly.

“Do you *want* the cold to blow in?”

“I broke the window,” Will growled.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. Surprised and a little impressed by Will. “You? Why on earth did you do that?”

“To get your fucking tupperware.” Will hissed.

“You curse when you're scared,” Hannibal noted softly.

Will scowled, “I’ll fucking curse when I damn well *want* to.”

Hannibal hummed, but moved on, “Wouldn’t it have been easier to just open the door, instead of breaking a window?”

Will barked out a short laugh, “If only I had the keys.”

Hannibal once more raised his eyebrows. He was certain he knew the answer, but it was better for Will to answer him, "Where are the keys?"

Will looked away, staring outside, "They took them."

"They?"

Will gave him a lopsided grin that looked like he was struggling not to cry, "They took my wallet and my keys, but don't worry they gave me this," He gestured to his face, bruised and cut. Hannibal nodded, glad his mongoose had finally told him. He had been mugged, and he hadn't wanted to reveal what had happened or else his whole situation would become apparent.

"Oh, Will," Hannibal said softly as he pulled Will back into his arms. Will went with an unhappy grunt, but he settled in Hannibal's warm embrace. He leaned against Hannibal, sighing in unhappy contentment at being held against something so warm.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there to help."

"You did help," Will argued.

"I could have stopped them from touching you. You should never have been hurt."

Will shook his head, "There were two of them, they would have gotten you too then."

"I don't believe so," Hannibal said quietly. He could imagine how'd he twist the perpetrators arms, perhaps even breaking them for touching his mongoose. His grip tightened on Will, angry at even the thought of them looking at Will.

Will grunted, "Ok Mr. Macho, I get it."

"Mr. Macho?" Hannibal asked, he hadn't heard the term before.

"You're big and tough," Will explained.

"Only if you say so," Hannibal agreed, which only made Will huff in annoyance and snuggle closer.

"Are you cold?" Hannibal asked.

Will nodded.

"Why don't we go home?" He suggested, "I can also get you a hotel room instead, if you'd like."

Will tensed up, he muttered under his breath, "No thank you."

"No to my house or no to the hotel?" Hannibal tried to sooth his increasingly rigid mongoose.

"No hotel," Will said blankly. He looked lost in a memory.

"Alright, Will. We'll go to my house." Will didn't respond, still tense and lost as before. Hannibal decided not to break the younger man's trance. Instead he drew out his phone and ordered a car. The service replied they'd be there soon. Hannibal ran his hand gently up and down Will's arm, trying to warm him as they waited.

Hannibal wondered what had Will so entrapped in his mind. Looking around the car, he could see Will's destitute situation. He wondered at how he came to such a situation. Surely Will had family who supported him? Did he not speak of a mother who fixed him duck on Christmas? Was his mother no longer around?

A pair of headlights pulled into the parking lot. Will jumped, his eyes wide with fear, “Is it a cop?”

“No, I called a car,” Hannibal assured him.

“Oh.” Will looked puzzled, “Why do we need a car?”

“Because we are nearly a mile from my home, in a bad neighborhood where you were just mugged, and it’s rather cold outside.”

“We could’ve walked,” Will mumbled but offered no more argument.

“Do you need anything from the vehicle?” Hannibal asked.

“Backpack and blankets, that’s it,” Will grunted.

Hannibal nodded though inwardly he was worried sick. All of Will’s possessions could be carried on his shoulders. He suddenly realized the lack of food in the car. Will always assure him and Beverly he ate, but Hannibal could see that was another lie. Obviously, the young man didn’t have any food. Had he been eating anything?

Hannibal climbed out of the car. Will followed more slowly. He hesitantly walked around the car to where Hannibal stood. He was much too thin, Hannibal realized. Even with the blankets wrapped around his shoulders, he looked small enough to melt into the pavement.

“Come, let’s get you out of the cold.” Hannibal said. He wrapped his arm around Will’s shivering shoulders and walked him to the taxi. Will went quietly and Hannibal could hear the sigh of relief as he entered the warm car. Hannibal walked to the other side of the car and climbed in beside Will. He gave the driver directions. Will was slumped in the seat with his arms crossed. He was looking once more angry.

Hannibal sighed. It would be a long night, but at least the mystery of Will's injuries were solved and his mongoose was not out in the cold.

The kite will sink

Chapter Notes

Here's an early chapter for you all to suck on before the weekend. Enjoy!

Will was struggling to figure out if he should be pissed off or not. He was leaning towards pissed.

It was fucking rude of Hannibal to barge into his personal life. Seriously, the man had followed him through the dark at night to his car. Wasn't that creepy stalker vibes? Hannibal could have just asked him where he lived.

Like hell you would have told him.

Shut up.

The man had also not left when he had very specifically, very loudly, and quite emotionally asked him to leave. Hannibal was being a pushy overbearing asshole. He had even tried telling Will what he should want. Will was fed-up with being told what to do by rich men. He wanted to scream at Hannibal, maybe even hit him. Maybe that'd prove he didn't have to do what Hannibal said.

Then again, it was nice when Hannibal held him. He was so soft and gentle. There was no demanding wrenching of his body, no hand locked around his wrist. There was no twisting of his hair. And while Will was used to *his* hand choking his airways, he was very happy Hannibal hadn't touched his neck. Hannibal had just opened his arms and let Will fall into them. He had behaved like the perfect gentleman.

Except when he offered you a hotel room. Will hated that. Hotels meant secret rendezvous, dirty sheets, crying alone when *he* was finished with him. Will managed a glance at Hannibal across from in the taxi. Will crossed his arms and scowled. How dare Hannibal suggest

getting a hotel room? It was wrong, so wrong. But Hannibal was sitting a good distance away and not touching him. That was good. In fact Hannibal seemed to be strictly ignoring him, which Will was grateful for. He didn't have enough energy to meet another's eyes. Let alone someone who wanted to see him— wanted to care for him.

He fidgeted in his seat, unwilling and unable to speak with all the thoughts racing through his head. He pulled the blankets closer to himself. He was warm enough in the car's heating, but they felt like a shield protecting him.

They got back to Hannibal's apartment (definitely a fucking house), and Hannibal got out after offering to carry his stuff inside, but Will just grunted his dissent. Will shuffled out of the car, holding his whole life in his arms.

The reality of the situation hitting him as he went back into the house he had just fled. He couldn't stay here. It went against all his convictions. He wasn't supposed to take help. Accepting help meant he owed Hannibal. He couldn't pay him back. What would Hannibal ask for? What would the man demand? Dread crept up Will's spine, wrapping itself around his lungs until he couldn't breath.

"I'm sure you're tired," Hannibal's voice broke into his thoughts, "I'll show you the guest room... Will?"

Hannibal turned to him now. Will stood in the open doorway. He swayed slightly. Maybe he could make a run for it. He could disappear into the night. Then Hannibal wouldn't ask him for anything.

"Will?" Hannibal asked slowly.

Run. Run now.

Will turned towards the door quickly, meaning to dart out, but Hannibal was there. The man could move fast, and before Will could run, Hannibal had shut the door. Will made a choking noise as the easy escape was closed to him.

“No, please,” Will gasped softly. Either Hannibal didn’t hear him or was ignoring his anguish, because he took Will’s hand and gently pulled him deeper into the house. Will dug his heels, stopping their trek and twisted his hand free, “I think I should go.”

Hannibal frowned at him, making him want to melt in his boots. “It’s cold outside.”

Will kicked his feet, “I know, I just…” he mumbled before turning and fleeing back to the door. Unfortunately, Hannibal was still faster than him. He caught him, his hands cupping Will’s face.

“Will, don’t be frightened.”

Will huffed, “I’m not frightened.”

Hannibal looked amused, “Of course not. But it does frighten me thinking of you out there. Won’t you stay? For me?”

Will rolled his eyes, pushing Hannibal’s hands away, “That’s some lazy manipulation, Hannibal.”

Hannibal looked delighted at being caught, “Is it? Tell me then, did it work or not?”

“I can see right through it,” Will snapped with no heat.

Hannibal reached down clasping one of Will’s hands, “You’re too clever for me. But you can’t seriously be thinking about walking all the way back to your car. It’s late, Will, just stay here.”

“I don’t want to inconvenience you,” Will muttered thinking about how much he was asking of the older student. He hated relying on people– especially attractive Europeans who were too good for him.

“You’re not,” Hannibal assured him. He took his other hand, “I have a spare room. Please take it. For as long as you need. It would make me less worried.”

“Fine,” Will sighed, “But that really is some awful manipulation, *Lecter* .”

Hannibal laughed, kissing each one of Will’s hands, “I will have to work on my manipulations.”

Hannibal peppered his hands with more kisses, which made Will blush. This man must have been pulled straight from one of those old fairy tales with princes and chivalry and crap. He was being really nice and he was very enthusiastic about caring for Will. Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad? Will couldn’t help but smile as Hannibal led him hand in hand up a staircase and to the guest bedroom. Hannibal would kiss his hand every now and then, like he was rewarding Will for following him. It was ridiculous.

And very endearing.

The bedroom was very nice though, simply decorated with its own bathroom attached. Hannibal darted from the room promising to return in a moment and left Will to look around. Will hadn’t slept in a bed for so long that the queen sized mattress with its fluffy pillows and thick duvet had him drooling. He couldn’t wait to curl up in its warmth and drown in the bed covers. He dumped his own raggedy blankets on the bed and his backpack on a chair by a desk.

Hannibal returned quickly with a pair of his own pajamas folded neatly and several towels for the bath. “Here are some pajamas if you need some, and towels if you’d like to shower. There’s soap and things in the bathroom cabinet.”

“Thanks,” Will said, tracing his finger along the embroidery of the bed covers.

“Would you like hot chocolate? I started some downstairs already.”

“Uh, sure,” Will answered nervously. He would have declined but the man had already started making it, so it would be rude to say no.

“Would you like anything washed?” Hannibal asked lightly.

Will’s face turned red from embarrassment. He hadn’t properly washed any of his clothes or bedding in weeks now. He tried washing his clothes in the public sinks, but that only did so much to remove the muck and the smell. He knew he was dirty and it made him ashamed. What had his mother always told him? *Never let anyone see*. But Hannibal was seeing all too clearly. Perhaps it would be ok? Hannibal had already seen him crying in his car. Why not let him see a little more? Plus he really could use the laundry.

“Ok,” Will said softly, avoiding Hannibal’s eyes like the plague. He scooped up his blankets and stood fidgeting while he waited for Hannibal to show him the way. But Hannibal just smiled and strode over to him. He took the bundle from Will. Will cried out startled at the sudden loss, “What? What–!”

“Do you have anything else you’d like washed?” Hannibal asked, his arms full of the blankets.

“I can take those!” Will tried to take the blankets back, but Hannibal turned too quickly away from him to grab them. Will huffed in anger, those were his blankets, Hannibal shouldn’t just take them.

“Why don’t you wash some of your clothes as well. Bring your backpack, I’ll show you where the washers are.” Hannibal said ignoring Will’s heated face.

Will rather aggressively snagged his backpack as he followed the blanket thief down the hall to the laundry room, because, heavens above, Hannibal had a whole room for his laundry

with high tech dryers and washers. Will was used to the coin laundromat machines that only had two settings: on and off. Hannibal's washer had a motherfucking computer screen.

Thankfully, Hannibal didn't seem to mind working the washer, because quickly, Will's blankets disappeared into the opening. Hannibal patted the countertop (*because of course there was a whole ass counter and sink in the laundry room*) and said, "Put your clothes here, and I'll put them in the next load."

Will wanted to argue, he was so embarrassed. Talk about "airing the laundry", Hannibal was seeing everything. *Everything* . But Will couldn't think of another opportunity to wash his clothes anytime soon. It was either face Hannibal or stink for the next week. He sigh dejectedly and began to pull his carefully folded clothes from his bag. He didn't have many, a pair of pants, some extra T-shirts, some socks and underwear. He placed them all in a pile, awaiting the wash.

"I think the hoodie too," Hannibal said gently.

Will crossed his arms, hugging himself. The hoodie was a security blanket. He couldn't lose it. "I'd rather keep it on."

"Will, it has blood—"

"I said, I'd rather keep it on!" Will snarled.

"Alright," Hannibal relented immediately, "I think the hot chocolate is ready by now. I'll bring you up a cup."

Hannibal left and Will sighed in relief. His shoulders sagged as he relaxed. Hannibal was stressing him out.

No. That wasn't right. Everything was stressing him out. He felt like he was about to snap, so tense with stress. Anything could send him spiraling.

He looked down at his hoodie. Hannibal was right. There was a bit of blood that had dripped down the front from his head injury. The cuffs on the sleeves were also stained brown from where he must have wiped his bloody brow. It needed to be cleaned. Listening to make sure Hannibal wasn't near, Will shrugged the hoodie off and placed it in the pile of clothes. He still had his flannel which he tucked closely around him as he walked back to the bedroom with his bag.

Hannibal was up a moment later carrying a tray laden with hot chocolate and snacks. If he noticed the missing hoodie, he didn't say anything.

"Careful, it's hot," Hannibal said as he handed Will a steaming mug.

"Where's yours?" Will asked as he took the mug and sipped the rich liquid chocolate.

Hannibal waved the question off, "I don't drink sweets before bed."

It was a smooth way of saying that he had made the hot chocolate specifically for Will. That made Will feel warm and tingly inside *and maybe a little guilty*. He sipped the hot drink again, moaning at the taste, "God that's good. You're missing out."

Hannibal looked at him fondly, "I'm just happy you're enjoying it. There's snacks here too, if you get hungry. If you need anything made please wake me and I'll make it for you."

Will nodded then grinned, "Sure you don't need 3 to 5 business days to prepare something?"

Hannibal grinned back at him, "Only for peanut butter and jelly I'm afraid."

Will liked when Hannibal looked at him like that. But the fluttering in his stomach made him look away. He searched for words to say, "Uh, thanks for everything. I'm sorry for bothering you."

“It’s no bother, Will,” Hannibal said, “I’m just very glad you agreed.”

Will nodded, looking down into his hot chocolate, wishing he could disappear into its brown swirls. Then maybe his blushing would disappear.

“If you do take a shower tonight, please take the bandages off. I can re-do them after you’ve finished or in the morning.”

“Morning,” Will said quickly. He really didn’t think he could handle anymore touching today. Hannibal seemed to understand because he didn’t argue.

“Would you—” Will started then stopped.

“Yes, Will?”

“It’s nothing, never mind,” Will mumbled, looking anywhere except the man.

Except the man was walking closer until he filled his vision. And then Will found his face being cupped again by two gentle hands. Maroon eyes met his, “What is it, Will?”

“I– I was just going to ask, if you could wake me up, in case I sleep in. It’s the weekend and I have to work double.”

Hannibal frowned, releasing his face, “You’re working tomorrow?”

“Y–yes. Coffee shop and then hardware store.” Will was excited for the next day, he’d get paid and finally he could work on getting himself things he needed. A coat and hat, duck tape to fix the window, food. If he went to a car place he might be able to get his key replaced, then maybe a couple gallons of gas. He’d be good as golden.

Hannibal seemed doubtful of his ventures but agreed hesitantly, “When should I wake you if you’re not up?”

“Six-thirty. I have to be at the coffee shop at eight sharp.”

“My, you are expeditious.” Hannibal shook his head amused, “Are you sure you’ll be up for working all day?”

Will frowned. Of course he was up for it. There was no other way to be. He had to work or die. He growled at Hannibal, “I’ll be fine. I’ve worked more than this before.”

Hannibal raised his hands placatingly, “I only meant, with your injuries, if you’d be ok. I don’t doubt you are a hard worker.”

“I’ll be fine,” Will muttered. Will had worked with worse injuries before on the boat yards with his dad. This was nothing. A couple bruised ribs and a battered face? Will could laugh at those injuries compared to what he’s dealt with.

Hannibal nodded, seeming to accept that his worries would do nothing to change Will’s mind. He clasped Will lightly on the shoulder, “I’ll let you rest. Please come get me if you need anything. I’m right down the hall.”

Will stomach clenched see the man leave, but he just waved, “Night, Hannibal.”

“Good night, mongoose,” Hannibal said with a soft smile before closing the door.

*

“Will...”

The haunting voice trailed behind his ear prickling the back of his neck. Cold fingers wrapped around his throat. He felt a body press behind him. He tried to move away, but hands were gripping his hips. Hands along his arms. Nails biting into every inch of his skin.

He wanted to kick and scream, But monster seemed to have hundreds of hands. It held him fast and when he tried to scream, fingers choked his mouth. Dulling the sound, muting him and suffocating him, until he could cry no more.

*

“WILL!”

Hands were shaking him.

He bolted upright, shoving the hands away as he scrambled away. His flight was hindered by blankets twisted around his body and fluffy pillows blocked his escape. He looked wildly around, bewildered at finding himself in a nice homey room.

A man– Hannibal– stood by the bed looking shell shocked and worried. His hair was loose and messy as if he had just awoken. He was dressed in sleep pants and a red sweater. Will panted, staring at him fearfully, “W–What are you– you doing?”

“You were screaming,” Hannibal answered.

Will frowned. That made sense, the nightmare had felt so real. He sighed looking down, “Sorry. Didn’t mean to wake you.”

“Are you alright? I was worried I couldn’t rouse you,” Hannibal’s brows creased.

Will nodded, "Yeah, I get bad dreams sometimes. It's fine." Hannibal seemed to want to argue, so Will opened his mouth before him, "What time is it?"

Hannibal glanced at his watch, "Six."

Will rubbed his face before swinging his legs out of the bed. He was already awake and he doubted he could fall back to sleep after such a nightmare. He sighed, "Might as well get up now."

"You're bleeding," Hannibal said suddenly.

Will looked down at his hand, there was blood. He touched his temple, finding the gash must have re-opened in his thrashing, "Oh."

He glanced down at the pillow and found there were blood stains now covering the sheets.

"Fuck," He breathed. He gave a pained expression to Hannibal, "I'm so sorry Hannibal. God, I'll replace the sheets I swear. I'm sorry."

Hannibal shook his head, "Will, the sheets don't matter. Let's get your forehead rebandaged, alright?"

Will wanted to apologize some more, but Hannibal was already marching out of the room, "I'll be right back with the supplies."

Will wasted no time darting to the bathroom and changing into his clothes. He had showered yesterday and changed into Hannibal's extra pair of pajamas. Now he needed his clothes back on. He needed to get out of this place. He couldn't believe Hannibal hadn't shouted at him for ruining his sheets. This was obviously a big mistake. He changed and shoved his bathroom things in his backpack before returning to the room.

Hannibal knocked before entering. He was holding a laundry basket. The first aid kit rested on top of the clean and neatly folded blankets and clothes.

He folded my clothes . Will went pink.

“You’re dressed,” Hannibal observed, placing the basket on the bed.

Will fidgeted nervously, “Yeah, I gotta go to work.”

Hannibal nodded. He seemed... sad. He was opening the first aid kit and taking the bandages. He gestured for Will to sit. Will obliged, trying not to look at the bloodbath on the sheets. Hannibal wiped the blood away then sterilized the wound. He quickly covered the wound, pressing the gauze firmly in place before securing it down.

“There,” Hannibal surveyed his work approvingly, “That should last through the day.”

“Thanks Hannibal,” Will said gratefully. He didn’t have the money for first aid supplies, so Hannibal was a godsend.

“We’ll change it after your shifts tonight,” Hannibal said flippantly.

Will drew in a breath. He was supposed to come back? Did Hannibal expect him to return? Was this some sort of long term thing? Hannibal hadn’t mentioned that yesterday– or had Will just not noticed? *You were fucking drunk on being cared for, you idiot.* Will bite his lip nervously, “What do you mean Hannibal?”

Hannibal glanced at him, straightening as he realized Will was tense, “You’ll need to change the bandages. And then you’ll stay here, until... you’re ready.”

“Until I’m ready?” Will repeated, his voice hard. What the hell did that mean? He couldn’t stay here. Didn’t Hannibal see how difficult he was? Hannibal did not want him to stay– not

unless he had ulterior motives. Will's stomach did a flip in fear.

"When you're ready," Hannibal agreed, though his voice sounded hesitant, "When you can get your own place or stay in the dorms."

Will gapped at the man. Did Hannibal not understand how impossible for him it was to get a place? How much money he'd have to save? It would be months before Will could even consider it. He just had to keep his head above the water for now. He found himself shaking his head muttering, "No, no, no."

"Will?" Hannibal asked.

Will stood, grabbing his backpack. He pulled the basket near and began shoving the carefully folded clothes into his backpack. He needed to leave.

"Will, what are you doing?"

"I need to go, Hannibal, I can't stay here."

"Of course you can stay here," Hannibal assured him.

"You don't even know what that means, Hannibal," Will shook his head. He grabbed a clean pair of socks and pulled them on his feet. Going for his shoes next.

"Will, slow down. You can stay here— I thought I made that clear. You can't be sleeping outside."

Will huffed. Hannibal just didn't understand. He didn't know what it meant to owe somebody a debt. He didn't know what he was fucking offering, "Look Hannibal, I appreciate the offer, but you don't even know what you're suggesting. You need to live your life and I'll live mine."

“Will!” Hannibal protested, “You can stay here until another situation comes up, I don’t mind.”

“You don’t mind?” Will laughed, “You don’t mind getting woken up by screaming? Somebody eating your food? Staining your bedding? No, Hannibal, you will mind.”

Hannibal looked angry then, a look that Will had never seen before, “Will stop this. I can’t believe this is even being discussed. You’re staying here.”

“I’m not,” Will said through gritted teeth as he drew his grubby shoes on his feet.

“Will, you don’t have anything. No money, no car—”

“I’m aware.”

“You can stay here, at least until the police locate your wallet.”

“The police?” Will sputtered.

“Yes, the police. You need to report the crime, Will.” Hannibal said exasperated.

“I’m not going to the police!” Will said heatedly.

“Yes, you are, Will,” Hannibal countered, “Those miscreants need to be caught.”

“Are you serious right now?” Will gaped. Didn’t Hannibal see that the only miscreant the police would find was him. He could be arrested for countless laws: trespassing, loitering,

lying to a police officer, stealing a car. Did Hannibal want him arrested? Maybe this was a threat. Maybe this was what Hannibal wanted to hold over him?

“Of course I’m serious! You must go to the police. I understand you’re working today, but first thing tomorrow, you and I are going to the police.”

“No!” Will shouted. All he could imagine were those hands grabbing him holding him.

“Will? What is the matter with you—”

“Shut up!” Will yelled, grabbing his backpack and blankets, “I’m not staying with you! You can’t make me!”

“I’m not making you do anything, Will,” Hannibal shot back, his face full of confusion and frustration.

“Well, I’m not going to the police,” Will spat.

“Will—”

“And I’m not coming back here tonight so you can lose whatever twisted fantasies you have about me!” Will turned, ripping open the bedroom door and quickly bounded down the steps. The pounding in his ears was so strong, he didn’t hear Hannibal after him.

He just felt a hand grip his arm. His nightmare seemed suddenly real and he screamed.

“Get off me! Don’t fucking touch me!” With all his might he shoved his attacker away. He dashed for the door.

“Will! Will wait!” Hannibal called.

Will fumbled with the large front door. Somehow he just couldn't get the locks to undo. He could hear Hannibal approaching from behind and he shrieked in terror. Those hands were going to take him and hold him down. He could feel the presence behind him. Creeping up on him. His shrieks turned to sobs as Hannibal loomed. He pressed himself against the door, sliding down its unwavering surface, trying to make himself smaller.

The figure reached over him and Will thought he was going to die. He cried out shielding his face with his hands, "Please! Please! I'm sorry!"

But the hand didn't descend upon him. Instead it flipped the lock on the door and retreated.

"It's unlocked." A voice said.

Will was panting and shaking but the figure—Hannibal, yes that was definitely Hannibal—stood gravely away from him. His hands were clasped in front of him and he didn't seem like the monster Will had just imagined.

Trembling Will stood, then rushed to the door handle, turning it and darting outside. He stumbled down the steps and collapsed on the sidewalk shivering and breathing hard.

"Will?" the concerned voice asked.

Will turned, looking up at the house. Hannibal was standing on the top step looking down worriedly. He seemed shaken and disturbed.

"Don't touch me," Will repeated his earlier words, but this time with no anger, just fear.

Hannibal stepped back, "I won't. I promise I won't."

Will slowly stood, wiping his face with the back of his sleeve. The fear that had just exploded inside was turning quickly to shame. What had he done? Had he just shouted and screamed like an insane person? He had just snapped. And Hannibal had seen all of it.

Will felt sick. He hugged his blankets to his chest as the feeling of nausea swept through him. He wanted to puke.

“Will, why don’t you sit down. Would you like some water?” Hannibal asked gently.

Will shook his head. He rasped, “I’m fine.”

“Why don’t you sit down? You have time.”

“You don’t own me,” Will said firmly. More for his own mind than for Hannibal to hear. He was his own person. He was Ok. He could survive by himself.

“Of course I don’t,” Hannibal sounded hurt. Will felt a twinge of guilt. He squeezed his eyes close. He needed to say these things. Better to hurt then to be hurt.

“I don’t want to be around you.”

“Will, where is this coming from?” Hannibal asked, confused and wounded.

Will turned back to face him suddenly. He pointed his finger accusatively, “Don’t fucking follow me.”

Tripping and staggering down the street, Will left in a hurry. He wanted to throw up. He wanted to cry. He wanted to punch and kick. Instead he just hobbled away, leaving Hannibal to lick his wounds.

The hand holds the line taut

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all the welcome backs, it's great to be writing again.

CHAPTER WARNINGS: drinking, referenced drug use, harassment, sexual assault.

Deja vu was a strange experience. The feeling didn't sit well on Hannibal's chest. There he was, once more, watching the frightened mongoose run away from his doorstep. This time with the strict command not to follow him.

Hannibal retreated into the house, slamming the door none too gently. He recognized he was angry. Yes, Will Graham had infuriated him. Hurling those terrible words at him. His mongoose was rude and vile, and very, very scared.

Hannibal took a breath, calming himself. Will was just frightened. He knew this about his mongoose: he became angry and rude when he was scared. The nightmare must have caused some new anxieties to rise to the surface. And when Hannibal had innocently mentioned going to the police, Will had lashed out. Hannibal took another calming breath, releasing the tension he was holding.

Will did not need his anger, just his understanding. He retraced his steps. There was the door, the image of Will screaming and curled in fear beside it rose in his mind. Will had been certain something was chasing him, but the only person behind him was Hannibal. When Hannibal moved to open the door. His mongoose had shrunk crying and begging to the floor. His terror of Hannibal– or whatever Hannibal represented in his mind– had overwhelmed him.

Hannibal left the spot going to the bottom of the stairs. Here he had caught Will. Trying to slow the young man's flight. Maybe not the wisest of actions, grabbing his frightened mongoose, but in the moment Hannibal could think of no other way to stop him. He wanted him to think rationally. But Will did not think this way, his mind was ruled by fear. Fear is emotional, volatile, and dangerous.

He rubbed his chest where Will had shoved him. Will was strong—fiercely so. Hannibal would bruise, a reminder not to touch his precious mongoose. Or more so, if he touched, he'd get bit.

He made his way up the stairs, back to the bedroom. The bedding was in a disarray from where Will had thrashed in his sleep.

Hannibal pulled one of the stained pillows close. He held it to his face breathing in Will's scent. The blood smelled sweet and of iron. The fabric was clammy from Will's sweat. He didn't necessarily enjoy the smell, Will was distressed. He wondered what the pillow would smell like if Will slept relaxed and safe.

He stripped the bed, finding nothing else to do, and carried the bundle to the laundry room. He completely forgot about the sheets when he saw Will's hoodie drying on the rack. The clunky material had still been damp when Hannibal drew it from the dryer. He had meant to return it to Will later once it had dried fully.

He took the hoodie holding it to his face. Oh, if Will saw him, the mongoose would yell and hit him until he gave it back. Hannibal smiled imagining Will's anger dissipating to shame as soon as he had the hoodie back. He might even mumble an apology or thanks to Hannibal. He was so adorably ferocious.

Hannibal decided then: he was going to find Will and return the hoodie. But more importantly. Find his mongoose and bring him home.

*

Will made it to the coffee shop with time to spare. Alana had opened the shop already so Will slipped in and stashed his stuff in the back room. The hastily packed backpack and the freshly laundered blankets were slumped under the breakroom's table, safe from any prying eyes or hands. The walk had cleared his head, but Will was sure he'd spiral if anything happened. He was on edge.

He wasn't looking forward to the shift. Taking people's orders. They'd look him in the eyes. Their curiosity would trail over his bruised face, the large bandage. They'd wonder in their minds if a criminal was serving them coffee. He could see the judgment so clearly in their faces.

"You're early," Alana, the pretty brunette manager, observed walking in from the front. She was nice. She had taught him the register patiently, but as soon as he had a grasp she was whisked off to other places. The coffee shop was extremely busy in the mornings. No time for Will to be coddled with sweetness.

Will shrugged, "Better early than late."

Alana smiled, "You trying to earn manager brownie points?"

Will smile sheepishly, "Maybe."

Alana laughed, bright and happy. Will wished he could be like her.

"Well, come on then, get yourself a fresh brew and try a pastry." Alana offered over her shoulder as she went back to the front.

Will followed, he wasn't about to turn down coffee *and* food. Alana served him a cup of her famous brew and handed him a large Danish. Hannibal could probably make something like this.

Stop it. Don't think about Hannibal.

With food and drink in hand, Will sat at one of the tables and ate. Alana was wiping down the counters and Will wondered if he should help. He stood hesitantly, "Hey, do you need—"

"Sit down, I got this." She waved. Will sat back down. The only thing to do was munch on his danish. He was not a big talker, especially when he had a lot on his mind.

Alana was quiet for a bit before blurting out, "So, not to seem pushy, but what happened to your face?"

Will found himself blushing and avoiding her eyes for no reason, he mumbled sarcastically, "Fought a rhino."

"Ah, we get a lot of those here in D.C."

Will snickered. His raw emotions felt smoothed by her lighthearted words. He wanted to try and be honest. "Yeah, I actually got jumped, but I swear I'm ok. Looks worse than it is."

Alana crossed her arms, frowning with concern, "Damn. I'm sorry, Will. Are you sure you're good?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Shoulda seen the other guy." Will said lamely.

Alana raised her eyebrows. He could tell she didn't quite believe him. Thankfully she wasn't pushy like his friends. "Well hey, if you need breaks, lemme know. And finish that coffee, it'll make you look less pale."

Will acquiesced with a nod, turning back to his food and drink.

*

After the coffee shop shift ended in the afternoon, Alana handed him his pay. It was about \$100 dollars— cash. When he had told her he couldn't take checks she was a little concerned, but Will put his puppy dog eyes on and she agreed.

He rolled up the money and shoved it down his sock in his shoe. If he got mugged again, hopefully they wouldn't take his shoes and socks. He trekked over to the hardware store with his belongings in his arms. The owner, Mr. Gillespie, wasn't half as nice as Alana. He sent Will straight to the back to start unloading pallets.

After hours of hard work, Will stood fidgeting in front of Mr. Gillespie's desk while the man counted out the cash. Sweat had stained through both his shirt and flannel, but he dared not take them off afraid people might see the discolored bruises. Mr. Gillespie finished and handed him a yellowed envelope with cash. When Will had asked to be paid in cash, Mr. Gillespie had almost looked glad. Will was certain his wages were seeing some sort of cut, but he was too fearful to argue. He took the envelope and left.

Outside the store, it was nearly dark as the night approached. Will sat on the curb. His bag on his back and blankets piled next to him. He thumbed open the envelope and pulled out the cash. There was about \$100. He sighed in frustration. He barely worked at the coffee shop, and yet he made the same amount. Mr. Gillespie was definitely screwing him over. He wondered hopelessly if Alana would give him more shifts at the coffee shop.

He rolled up the money and put it in his other shoe, except a \$20 dollar bill he slipped in his back pocket. He began walking back to his car. He was planning on enduring the cold night, then tomorrow he'd duck tape the window and get a replacement key. If he warmed his car up before he went to sleep, Will believed he could sleep through the nights.

Just have to get through tonight.

That's when he saw the neon glowing sign. He hadn't noticed it before. He was surprised, it was so close to where his car was parked, hidden. The neon green coco cabana palm tree beckoned him into the sleazy strip mall bar. He bit his lip.

You could use a drink. It's gonna be cold. Might as well warm up now.

Will hurried to the library's parking lot, dumping his backpack in the car and tossing the blankets over them. He looked hard at them from the outside of the car. He couldn't see the hidden items. *No one is going to steal them*, he assured himself. He pulled another 20 from

his shoe and swore to himself that was all he would spend, before hurrying back to the bar. His belly was lustful for warm spirits and hard whiskey.

There was a good size crowd in the bar, but nobody was too rowdy. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke and Will could smell weed being burnt somewhere near. He wondered if he could get a joint, maybe something stronger. There were a couple of pool tables and a round of darts being played. He walked to the bar and ordered a whiskey. The bartender didn't even ask for his ID, just took his money and slid him a glass.

Oh, Will like it here.

He slouched at the end of the bar, nursing his whiskey and thinking hard. It was warm in here and obviously open late, if not all night. If he could stretch his drinks out, he could stay here most of the night. He would definitely burn through his cash and might get a little drunk, but he really did not want to go outside. He shivered and took another sip of his drink.

He finished the first and ordered another. And then another. By his fourth, he was finally in a happy place. His muscles were relaxed and his mind was a bit foggy. He still had his facilities, but he felt good for once. His injuries were numb and he wasn't mulling over his fears or problems any more. Now, all he was thinking about was whether one of the dark rooms in the back had something stronger than whiskey or weed that would make him forget everything entirely.

His hazy musings were interrupted, sharply.

"Hey sweetheart," A man slid into the seat next to him.

His body tensed immediately and he forced his mind to focus. There were four other seats available not by Will, and yet this man decided to sit directly next to him. Will had sat at the very end— clearly broadcasting his desire to be alone. Was this guy blind?

"God, you're pretty, even with those bruises," The man slurred. His eyes wandered all over Will. Will felt his skin prickling uncomfortably under the heated gaze. He shifted nervously,

not answering. Sometimes if he ignored people like this they'd get bored and leave. "Whatcha drinking?" God, the man's breath stank.

Will squared his shoulders, physically trying to build a wall. One of the man's grim hands patted his shoulders, "Hey there, baby don't be shy. Come on, whatcha drinking?"

Will lifted his glass, drinking down more of the bitter whiskey, seriously annoyed at the man. "Fuck off man," He grunted.

"Oh, he talks," The man chuckled, "Can I get a name or should I just call you sweetheart?"

Will stood, careful not to sway even though his head reeled dizzily. He took his drink and walked over to where the pool match was being played. He stood silently watching the game, praying that the man didn't follow him. Unfortunately, the man seemed hooked on him and followed him over, standing too close to his side. The creep leaned close to him, "Come on sweetheart, lemme buy you a drink. You want a beer?"

"Leave me alone," Will growled, keeping eyes trained on the match. He knew the man would find it a personal victory if he got Will's eye contact.

"I think you want a beer, don't move baby, I'll be right back." The man whispered his disgusting breath into Will's ear. Will shivered as the man left. He quickly downed the rest of his whiskey and made towards the door. He left in haste, looking behind him to see the man ordering at the bar. The man didn't seem to spot him. Will darted out the door, shoving his hands under his arms as the brisk night air hit him hard. *Fuck, he left his hoodie at Hannibal's.* He walked quickly towards his car. He wanted to curl up and hide and pray he'd never see that man again. Why had he gone to this bar? Why had he gotten drunk?

Stupid, stupid, stupid!

"Hey! Where you going sweetheart?" A voice shouted behind him. Will dared not look, trying to walk faster without panicking. Footsteps fell heavy on the street behind him. A hand grabbed him and twisted him around. The fingers gripped him so hard, he cried out in pain.

“I said, where ya going sweetheart,” The man’s voice said darkly, his drunk and cruel eyes finally meeting Will’s wide fearful one’s.

“Stop it!” Will said urgently, trying to wrench his arm away.

“No, no, no baby,” The man laughed, “I bought you a drink, you gonna come thank me for it.”

“I don’t want a drink!” Will spat, he shoved the man hard with his free arm. The attacker grunted, only to grab Will’s hair and yank. Will cried out in pain as his head was jerk backwards and his arm twisted round his back. His eyes swelled in pain.

“Now you can thank me real nice inside– or we can be not so nice out here,” The man said, jerking Will’s arm up. His nasty face was next to Will’s. The man’s lips pressed against Will’s neck, a fat tongue salved over Will and then lips were pressed against his own in a domineering kiss. Will struggled to pull away, but the terrible man wrench his arm once more making him cry out in pain.

Will felt tears burst in his eyes– it hurt. It hurt so much. Not just the searing in his arm, but the man’s cruel touch. He was touching him– kissing him just like *him* . Using Will just like *he* had. And here Will was. Once again playing the role he had time and time again. It was like some sort of sick deja vu. He just wanted it to stop.

He found himself begging and crying, “P–Please I’m sorry. Please stop.”

The man’s mouth covered his own again and Will didn’t fight this time. He slumped in the man’s hold and let the man ravage his mouth. The man, triumphant, loosened his grip. “There you go, sweetheart. See? Not so hard being nice. Let’s go get you something to drink.”

The man’s arm wrapped around his shoulders and Will was dragged close to his stinking body. Will offered no resistance, just glad his arm had been released. He felt dazed like he

was walking in a fog. Was it the whiskey? His body didn't seem like his own. The man pulled him back towards the bar.

"Excuse me." A voice interrupted.

The grimy man froze, halting Will's shuffling. The man turned, holding Will hard behind him, like a hyena guarding its prey. The man snapped, "What?!"

"I believe he said stop."

"Get lost— I'm buying him a drink."

"He said stop," The voice was harder now.

The man shook Will like a prize. Will whimpered, his tears sliding silently down his face. The man snapped, annoyed, "He's fine."

"He's crying."

"So what if he is? Not your problem asshole! Fuck o—!"

There was a loud crack and the man jerked backwards. His body slammed into Will. Will let out a startled cry, stumbling back and falling to the ground. He tried to catch himself, but his hands hit the pavement hard. The skin on his palms were scraped back. He sobbed, holding them to his chest as little droplets of blood beaded on the wounds.

The drunk man regained his footing and yelled at a tall figure in a long coat. "Is that all you got? Huh? You fucking—"

The tall man hit him again. Harder. His fist met the grubby man's skull. The sound was electric in the night air. The man stumbled, clutching head and he fell to his knees, groaning.

"I will kill you if you don't leave right now," The tall man seethed.

Will's attacker gave a high squeal, shielding his face as he tried to crawl away.

"Leave!" The tall man boomed.

Will flinched, but the drunkard scrambled to his feet and fled as fast as he could down the street. Will dully watch him disappear into the night. Finally the air was quiet sans Will's own ragged breathing. He found he was still sobbing. He drew his knees to his chest and buried his face in his arms. That man was gone, but the feeling– the terrible feeling hadn't stopped. The sick deja vu feeling: that after running from everything, he ended up in the same place.

"Will?" A soft and familiar voice asked, "Will? May I touch you? You're hurt."

Will raised his head, his voice shaky, "Hannibal?"

"Yes, Will. It's me. Can I help you up?" Hannibal's worried face was near. The man was kneeling beside him but not touching. His hands were posed if he wanted to reach out to Will, but was holding back.

"You're here?" Will stuttered, a little confused and amazed. How was Hannibal here? Wasn't Hannibal supposed to be in his big house away from Will and his stupid problems? Hadn't Will been infuriating enough?

Hannibal flushed, "I know, I'm sorry. You told me not to follow you– I didn't. I swear I didn't, but I went to your car, hoping you'd come."

"My car?" Will looked pale as death and his eyes were clouded.

Hannibal made an abortive movement with his hand to hold Will, but reeled himself back, “You weren’t there, but your backpack and blankets were there. God, I was so worried you’d been—” Hannibal stopped the words before he could utter them. Will could almost guess what he was about to say, he was glad the older man hadn’t. “—I’m just glad I found you. Let me help you. Please Will.”

Will began to sway. His head was pounding, his body was exhausted, and he felt the nausea that had been growing all day, swell up with intensity. He groaned, hugging himself tighter, “H–Hannibal. I–I don’t feel so good.”

His head rolled back, and his body tilted. Will flinched as he fainted. Hoping the jarring impact on the cement would send his hurting mind into unconsciousness.

Instead he was caught. Strong warm arms grasped him before he could fall. He was gently moved against a soft surface, his head pillowed on a warm chest. He found himself comfortably drifting into blissful unawareness. His last thought being on *deja vu*. Maybe, just maybe, if it felt like this, with strong warm arms around him, he might not mind the feeling.

Dragging the kite from the sea

Will's eyes rolled back and then his head tipped. Hannibal's chest clenched as he realized Will was about to faint. He jerked forward, less gracefully than he'd like, and caught Will before he could collapse on the pavement.

"Oh, Will," Hannibal breathed softly. Will's eyes fell closed and his face was slack. His breath smelled of alcohol. He pressed Will against his chest. He was cold, the thin flannel doing nothing to keep him warm. Hannibal slid his arm under his knees. Cradling the young man in his arms as he stood. Will was light, worryingly so. His head slipped back, but Hannibal gently bent it head forward, keeping him safely tucked under Hannibal's chin.

It was a short way to his car, parked in the library's lot. And Hannibal hurried. Will was too cold, too weak to be out in the elements. He opened his car door, reclining the seat back, he gently placed the unconscious man inside. He shrugged his coat off and covered Will, tucking the wool around him.

Will did not stir. He was breathing, but he made no other movement. A fainting spell shouldn't last long, his eyes were still closed. Hannibal worried that his head injury was more than a nasty scar. What if Will had a concussion?

With this new anxiety, Hannibal stole Will's items from the mongoose's car and put them in his own. Will would not want to part from them. Hannibal took Will to the hospital. He knew he'd most likely get screamed at by the mongoose, but he felt it was the safest place. They could assess his injuries and give him medicine, maybe fluids. The poor thing was half starved. Will didn't wake or even stir as they drove. And Hannibal worried.

Hannibal carried Will into the emergency room. Will's unconsciousness and his obvious head wound granted them immediate service and Will was placed in a room.

The nurses had changed the bandages under Hannibal's careful eye and a doctor had looked over Will, wanting to place Will on an IV, but Hannibal refused. Will would not want that done without his consent. After Hannibal had briefly explained what had happened, the doctor had assured him Will was just asleep. The deep slumber was most likely induced as a trauma response, but a concussion couldn't be ruled out. It would be best to test him when he woke. So Hannibal waited by Will's side until the morning came and the sun began to peak through the blinds.

Will stirred in the bed. Hannibal took his hand and squeezed it comfortingly. Will's head tossed to the side in the pillows as he struggled to wake. Hannibal wondered if he was having a bad dream. He kissed Will's hand bandaged hand, trying to soothe every tremor.

"Aš esu čia. It's alright my darling," Hannibal hushed as Will whimpered pitifully.

Will finally seemed to wake and he tried blinking, but shuddered and winced at the light. He moaned in pain. Hannibal stoked Will's knuckles, while his other hand went to cup Will's cheek gently, "Shh, darling. Go back to sleep if you need to. There's no rush."

Will seemed to give up on opening his eyes and relaxed into the pillow.

"There," He cooed, "Just rest, Will."

Will turned his face, nuzzling Hannibal's hand. His breath was warm and lovely against Hannibal's skin. Hannibal couldn't contain his smile, how endearing Will was like this.

"Hannibal?" Will rasped softly, still not opening his eyes.

"I'm here," Hannibal said softly. Will sighed softly, pressing his cheek against Hannibal's palm.

"Wh— where are we?"

Hannibal didn't want to say, afraid it would break whatever peace they had been building. He evaded, "You're safe, Will."

His evasion didn't work. Will was blinking his eyes open sleepily, "Where?"

Hannibal sighed. Persistent and stubborn, that was his mongoose, but he couldn't lie to him, "You're safe... in a hospital."

At the word hospital, Will's eyes blinked faster, trying to orient himself. A whine began in his throat.

"Will, you're ok. We'll leave as soon as the doctor's finished." Hannibal tried the comfort, He took Will's hand in both hands, holding it like something precious. Because he was precious.

Will's brow furrowed and he looked confused, "Doctor? What does the doctor want?"

"Will, you fainted. I couldn't wake you." Hannibal explained gently. Will finally looked at him. His eyes were huge and scared.

"What?" He gasped in disbelief.

"Do you remember what happened last night?" Hannibal asked gently. Will looked away, shame and fear flushing his face. He obviously did remember it. Hannibal hated making him think about it. He continued to explain, "You fainted, I had to make sure you were alright. The doctors think you have a concussion. I agree with them."

"A concussion? But I'm fine," Will argued.

"I know, Will, but you fainted which is a symptom of having a concussion. You just had a serious head trauma, it's likely you have a mild concussion. Have you had headaches or been dizzy? Feelings of nausea?"

"Yeah," Will answered warily, "But I just need to drink some water. It's not a concussion," Will emphasized.

"You may have a concussion and also be dehydrated," Hannibal broke gently, "They are not mutually exclusive. The doctor wanted to give you an IV."

"I don't want an IV," Will paled and he looked nervously at the door. He scooted up the pillows attempting to sit up. Hannibal helped him. Using the bed to sit him up and propped the pillows around him.

"It's alright, Will. I asked them to wait, to see if you could drink once you woke up." Hannibal comforted, "But that still doesn't mean you don't have a concussion."

"I don't have a concussion, Hannibal," Will said stubbornly. He looked so frightened, a fine sheen of sweat was forming on his skin.

"Will, tell me why you're worried," Hannibal asked gently, "Surely it wouldn't be as disastrous as you are making it?"

Will's eyes had the frantic look of a trapped animal. "I need to work! Hannibal, if they find out I'm passing out they won't let me work— I'll get fired!"

Hannibal frowned, "Will, you can take a few days off for being sick. They'll understand."

"No they won't! They'll get somebody else! I need that money!"

Hannibal sighed. "Will, I highly doubt that will happen."

"You don't know anything!" Will said viciously.

Hannibal leaned back, his hand rubbing his eyes. It was exhausting arguing with Will. He stayed calm though, "Maybe not, but I think it would be good to know for sure whether you have a concussion or not."

"This is stupid! I don't need to be here!"

"Will—"

"I want to leave!"

At that moment the door opened and a doctor strode in. Will immediately clamped up, shrinking against the bed. The doctor glanced between the two questioning. Will refused to meet her eyes and Hannibal just sighed.

"Good morning, " the doctor said, "You're Will Graham? Correct? Your friend didn't have any ID for you."

Will nodded.

"Well good, my name's Dr. Lee. I have a few forms for you to fill out and then we're going to do a quick check up. Your friend here wouldn't let us give you a full physical when you came in last night."

Will glanced at Hannibal. Hannibal could have sworn he saw something akin to softness, before Will turned away, angry again, “I don’t want a physical.”

The doctor raised her eyebrows, “Mr. Graham, you have a severe head wound, I would suggest you stick around for a check up.”

Will scowled, “It’s not that bad.”

“Well, you’re entitled to refuse care, but how about a compromise?” Lee asked hopefully.

“What do you mean?”

She twirled a small flashlight in her hand, “I’ll do a light test, see if you have a concussion and then you can decide if you wanna stay or go.”

Will glanced at Hannibal unsure, and Hannibal could feel the pride growing in his chest at Will seeking out his advice. He gave him a small nod in affirmative.

“Ok,” Will agreed, begrudgingly.

“Great!” The doctor exclaimed. She explained the process as she had him stare at the wall while she flashed the small light in his eyes. She hummed as she watched his eyes dilated slowly– too slowly. Hannibal watched intently, he winced as he saw it. Will’s pupil dilation was delayed. Will obviously had a concussion.

“Bad news, Mr. Graham, you have a mild concussion.”

Will made an unhappy grunt, “What does that mean?”

“It means you need to get lots of rest, and try not to think too hard.”

Will’s brow furrowed, “Can I leave?”

The doctor frowned and sighed, “I don’t suggest it, but yes. Once we get your forms.”

Will took the papers, staring at them hard. Hannibal could tell he was having difficulties reading. He decided to intervene, for Will’s sake. If the mongoose refused to stay– might as well help him escape. “I think that’ll be all,” Hannibal said to the doctor, “We’ll drop them off at the front when we leave.”

Dr. Lee gave him a puzzled look. Hannibal had been a staunch advocate for bringing Will in, now he was letting him leave? His compassion for Will was inconvenient.

“Well, finish those forms,” the doctor nodded curtly and left.

Once she was gone, Will dropped the papers, all pretenses of reading gone and covered his face. “God, why did you bring me here?”

“Are you asking god or me? Or a combination of us two?” Hannibal asked dryly.

Will shot him a look that was half annoyed and half amused, “You’re not funny.”

“I suppose not, another failure of mine,” He teased, “Tell me, is god more amusing than I am?”

Will rolled his eyes, “God, you’re awful.”

“See? Are you referring to god or myself? I don’t know how to feel until you answer. One answer could be that ‘the-almighty-god-of-the-universe-is-awful’ and that would be acceptable, the other,” He clutched his chest dramatically, “would wound my heart.”

“Jesus,” Will finally chuckled.

“Jesus?” Hannibal jumped on Will’s slip, making his mongoose laugh, “Should I be jealous of a multitude of deities vying for your attention? God, Jesus, who’s next? Shiva?”

Will snorted with laughter and the sound lifted Hannibal’s heart. He wanted Will happy. Will quieted and then handed him the papers, “Since you decided not to be a control freak, would you help me fill these out? The words are spinning on the page.”

“I relinquish control, and then you immediately hand it back?” Hannibal asked, taking the paper and pen.

“Call it a reward for good behavior,” Will said sarcastically.

“I like rewards.”

“I like good behavior.”

*

Hannibal had somehow charmed Will from the hospital, into his car, and back to his apartment/house. That, or Will was just falling for his humor and grace.

Fuck, he’s so hot when he looks like that.

Will starred as Hannibal placed his backpack on the living room coffee table and his blankets neatly folded on the couch. His shirt was rumpled and hugging his back. Will realized that Hannibal probably hadn’t changed from the day before.

Because he sat up with you all night.

Will felt his face redden again. Still, he appreciated the view as Hannibal turned and gestured for him to sit on the couch.

“Are you tired?” Hannibal asked.

Will sunk into the cushions nodding. He was exhausted. Which was ridiculous because he had gotten two full night’s rest on beds of all things. His body was revolting. It was not going

to enjoy going back to sleeping in the cold cramped car. But he shouldn't complain, at least he had Hannibal's couch at the moment.

"We should talk." Hannibal suggested.

Will winced and picked at the couch fabric, not meeting Hannibal's gaze. He really didn't want to talk. He just wanted to enjoy Hannibal's house and company until he inevitably kicked him out. Why did they need to talk about anything? It was cut and dry.

"I don't want you to leave."

Fucking mind reader.

Will looked up, surprised and uncertain, "What?"

Hannibal smiled at him looking fondly exasperated, "I don't want you to leave. You should stay here with me."

Will shook his head in disbelief, "No, you don't want that. I'm a mess, Hannibal."

Hannibal didn't respond, just sat beside him. Will's skin felt hot at how close they were. If he or Hannibal leaned just an inch closer they'd brush skin. It would spark, and his skin would blaze and he'd burn all over. He stared at his hands. They were trembling. A warm hand took his, and he wasn't on fire anymore. Hannibal's hand covered his own, holding it softly.

"You told me not to tell you what you want. I won't. But you cannot dissuade me from my desires either. I want you to stay."

Will swallowed. He really shouldn't. He should get out of there. He was scared Hannibal would turn into *him*. Hadn't *that* also started with sweet words and kind touches?

"I-I don't know."

Hannibal squeezed his hand, "You don't have to decide, just stay. Then if you choose to leave today, tomorrow, in a month, I won't stop you. You're free, Will."

Will gasped softly, "You promise?"

He knew he sounded childish. He knew it was just stupid words, but he needed to hear Hannibal say it. The blessed assurance of his freedom. Hannibal's fingers trailed down his face to his chin, gently asking for Will's gaze. Will blinked at the man through his lashes. Hannibal held his gaze, so strong and fierce.

"I promise."

Will looked down to where their hands were clasped. He felt overwhelmed and happy and most of all safe. His shoulders relaxed and the tension he had been holding everywhere slipped away. He let himself lean on Hannibal—trusting the man would let him go if it became too much. Hannibal wrapped his arm around his shoulders and pulled him close.

“Thank you.” Will sighed contentedly. Hannibal was warm and comfy. He let go of Hannibal’s hand and wrapped his arms around the man. Wondering if he squeezed hard enough if he could meld with him. Hannibal squeezed back, his embrace warm and assuring.

“I can pay you rent,” Will squeaked awkwardly against Hannibal’s chest. It was really the least he could do. He pulled away from Hannibal and scrambled to peel off his socks. The sweaty money was placed on the coffee table and Will glanced hopefully at Hannibal.

Hannibal was looking at him with amused concern, “You had all that in your socks?”

Will turned red, he sputtered indignantly, “I—I mean, well— yeah.” Hannibal chuckled and Will felt himself growing angry again, “I don’t have a wallet!”

Hannibal raised his hands, looking apologetic, “I’m sorry, Will. I didn’t mean to tease.”

Will huffed and crossed his arms. *No more hugs for the annoying Hannibal Lecter* . He glared at him, “It’s not funny.”

“I know,” Hannibal said gravely, “All the more reason to go to the police.”

They were getting worryingly off track in Will’s opinion, “This isn’t about going to the police. This is about us working out rent.”

“I don’t want your money, Will,” Hannibal said quickly.

“Well, I don’t want to feel like a freeloader,” Will retorted. He knew he could be stubborn, but faced with someone who was just as stubborn as him was difficult to say the least.

“You’ll be paying me back with peace of mind. And that’s plenty.”

“Ha. Ha. No, it’s not. If I had a fancy house—”

“Apartment.”

“-like this, I would be charging me rent!” Will finished flushed.

“Thankfully, I’m not you. I don’t need your money. If you would like to pay me back, you could go report your wallet stolen to the police.”

Will soured, and hunched in on himself. Hannibal wasn’t going to take his money. If he left it on the table, Will was certain it would be left alone or sneakily replaced in his socks. He also knew that Hannibal was right, he didn’t need the money. Hannibal was loaded. Will’s meager paycheck wouldn’t make a dent in Hannibal’s bills. Will huffed in frustration. He really didn’t want to go to the police.

Beside him Hannibal sighed. It seemed like he too was having difficulties in arguing with an equally stubborn person. Thankfully, he was a bit more reasonable than Will, “Why don’t we talk about this later?”

Will nodded. It's not like either of their minds would change, but this way they didn't tear each other's throats out.

"I'm going to make some tea, would you like some?" Hannibal asked.

"Sure, thanks," Will mumbled.

"Do you have to work tomorrow?"

Will nodded, even though he was not looking forward to dealing with Mr. Gillespie and his subpar payments, "Yeah, hardware store in the evening."

"If it's alright with you, I'd like to drive you there."

"Oh, Uh—" Will was surprised.

"I can pick you up after, as well."

It would be nice to have a ride and not have to walk. Dark streets were suddenly not very appealing. But surely Hannibal didn't have time for all that and his studies, "Uh— don't you have to study and stuff?"

Hannibal waved him off, "It's no bother. In fact, it will make a good study break."

Will wrung his hands nervously, "I'm mean, sure. If—if you want to. I can walk too, if you don't—"

"I do want to," Hannibal assured him, before standing up, "I'll be right back with your tea."

Hannibal left, leaving Will still nervously fidgeting on the couch. This was a strange kind of nice. Having someone tend and care for his needs. But then again, there was always that dark cloud looming at the back of Will's mind:

What if Hannibal was just like *him* ?

Up to the open air

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Since that weekend, it seemed like Hannibal expected Will to follow him around everywhere. When Hannibal went to make dinner, he came back to Will five minutes later and asked if he wanted to help. Will went nervously. When Will suggested they sleep after talking late into the night, Hannibal had begged him to stay up a few more minutes with him. Will stayed with hands wringing with nerves. Will went where Hannibal wished, it was only polite. The man was housing him and feeding him. But it felt terrifying all the same.

In the morning, Hannibal asked him if he'd like him to drive to campus– and accompany him to his swim practice. Will agreed to the ride. He was not going to turn down a car ride when it was cold outside, especially when Hannibal would probably drive back and forth just chauffeuring Will to his classes. The man had threatened it, even jingling his car keys menacingly.

Will only now realized that Hannibal didn't want his eye off him when he gestured for Will to follow him to the pool. Dread crept into his spine and he shook his head.

“Hannibal, I'm not going to watch your practice.”

Hannibal had the audacity to look confused, “What?”

“I need to work on assignments. I'm going to go to the library while you practice.”

“The campus library?”

“No, Hannibal, the public one a mile away,” Will said sarcastically.

Hannibal frowned, obviously not understanding, “I'll drive you, I can be late for practice.”

"I'm being sarcastic, Hannibal. I'm not going to walk all that way."

Hannibal could be a real idiot sometimes.

Hannibal shrugged, looking aloof and annoyed, "I wouldn't put it past you."

Will scoffed, "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

"You're very welcome." Hannibal grinned and Will didn't know if he wanted to punch the man or hug him. He just rolled his eyes and turned to leave, but Hannibal caught his hand, "When will I see you next?"

"Getting lonely already?" Will joked as he shook Hannibal's hand away.

"For you, always. But I'm more worried about you out in the cold," He looked critically at Will's hoodie, "Here, take this."

For a split second Will thought Hannibal was going to give him his coat, which Will would absolutely refuse. That was too much, but instead the man pulled out a key from his pocket and handed it over.

"The apartment key," Hannibal explained, "I'll be in classes until 5, I'll meet you at the house and then drive you to work. Does that work for you?"

"So it is a house," Will replied cheekily to cover up the monster of emotions welling up inside.

Hannibal gave me a key. This is real. Hannibal gave me a fucking key to his house!

He shoved the key in his pocket a little scared and happy all at the same time.

"Technically still an apartment, but yes," Hannibal smiled, "I'll see you there?"

Will nodded, "Yeah."

They stood there awkwardly (Or Will stood awkwardly and Hannibal looked like a fucking gorgeous Greek statue), that was until Hannibal stepped closer. He opened his arms and Will hesitated before shuffling in. Hannibal wrapped his arms around him. *Fuck, he's tall.* Will realized as he pressed his cheek against Hannibal's jaw, several inches shorter than the man. Standing there in the cold outside the gym, he could see the bench he had slept on just two days ago. God, so much had happened and now he was being hugged by his weird friend who was squeezing him like he cared about him.

Will pulled away first, too afraid to stay for any longer.

Hannibal brushed his hair from his face, making Will shiver from his finger tips, "Be safe."

"Ok," Will mumbled, unconvincingly. He made the mistake of glancing up. Hannibal was staring at his lips. They were still standing close and Hannibal was so close and warm and...

Shit. He's going to kiss me. Shit, shit, shit.

Will stepped away ducking his face away, "Alright, see you later!" He said far too quickly. He dashed off to the library not looking behind. If he had, he would have seen Hannibal staring after him and his empathy would have run wild.

*

"You what!?"

Beverly looked shocked and angry. That's what you get for telling the truth. He had been telling Beverly the *abridged and highly edited* version of the weekend events while they waited for their English class to begin.

"Yeah... I got mugged near my... apartment" Will repeated.

Ok, so definitely not an honest version. Baby steps, ok!

"Oh my god, Will, did you go to the hospital?"

"Uh, yeah, um Hannibal took me." Definitely not because of the mugging, but Hannibal took him nonetheless.

"Why did you tell me you tripped?" Beverly said crossly.

"I—I don't know. I guess I didn't want to worry you—"

"You think a big gash on your head isn't worrying enough?"

Will hugged himself. He hated this. "I'm sorry."

Beverly huffed.

Will sighed, "I mean it Bev, I'm really sorry I didn't tell you."

"You're an idiot," Beverly frowned.

Will squirmed in his seat. He didn't know what else to say. Beverly sighed long-suffering, "Look, I'm just glad you're ok, got it?"

Will nodded, afraid he'd mess up the truce if he spoke.

"Don't go walking around at night," Beverly ordered, "Especially around your apartment. It sounds like a terrible place to live."

"Actually about that..."

"Will Graham! What did you do?" Beverly said, accusatory.

"It's nothing, I just— don't feel safe there, so— Um, I'm staying with Hannibal until I can find something else."

Beverly softened and he found himself embalmed in Beverly's gorilla hold. *Two hugs in one day? New record.*

She finally let him breathe. "You're still an idiot, but at least you're not a stupid idiot."

He felt like a stupid idiot. What was he thinking, trying to go to school? He should have gone to the shipyards. Disappear in grease and mechanics. He did not belong among D.C.'s scholars. He did not belong in Hannibal's fancy-ass house. He did not deserve Beverly or Hannibal's friendships. If they knew half the things he'd done...

Beverly poked him in the stomach, "At least Hannibal will make sure you eat."

Will glared half heartedly, "I do eat. What are you? The food police?"

Beverly grinned, "Nah. But Hannibal will be."

Will rolled his eyes, knowing full well she was right. Hannibal had already made so much food and snacks Will was fairly certain they were set 'til spring.

"So, how'd it happen?"

"What?" Will asked.

Beverly was wiggling her eyebrows, "You know, you and Hannibal? Come on, you can't tell me there's nothing going on. Friends tell each other this kind of thing."

Will reddened, "There's nothing going on."

"Oh sure, you both are living together now. Please tell me there's something going on—it's too juicy!"

"Prepare to be disappointed," Will told her, "Look, Hannibal had to convince me to stay. He basically said he was worried about me staying in my ca— current place. I don't want him to worry and it's just until I find somewhere else."

Beverly squealed, "He's worried about you?"

"It's not a big deal."

Beverly was grinning ear to ear, "Definitely a big deal. Has he tried to kiss you?"

Will swallowed nervously, thinking about this morning. How Hannibal had stared at his lips. How his tongue had darted out to moisten his lips, as if preparing to lean forward and taste Will's.

Bev was eating up his nervous silence with wide eyes, "Oh my god he has!"

Will shook his head quickly, trying to get Beverly to calm down, "No, no, no— he hasn't. I don't think— I'm mean, well—"

Will was suddenly thinking about all those times Hannibal had taken his hand and pressed his lips to his knuckles. That wasn't kissing, right? That was just something weird and European. Europeans kiss hands like that when they're friends, right? *Right?*

"He totally tried to kiss you. Tell me everything!" Beverly urged eagerly.

Will blushed again, not sure how to convince her that Hannibal and him were just friends when he was suddenly unsure himself.

"Don't flip out," Will warned which only made Beverly grin more, "It's not kissing—"

"Ooo—"

"Shut up, it's not. He just like, sometimes, you know, kissesmyhandorsomething."

Will was blushing and Beverly was beaming like she'd won the lottery, "Like Jane Austen bowing and kissing your hand?"

Will shrugged, "Yeah, I guess... He's European, Bev. They do weird things."

"Or, he just really likes you, dummy." Beverly countered lightly.

Will sighed, it was pointless arguing with her. But even so, his mind now kept bringing pictures of Hannibal's lips pressed worshipfully against his skin. Will felt unwanted arousal stirring in his stomach. How would it feel to have Hannibal's mouth on his?

*

After their classes, Will half thought about inviting Beverly back to Hannibal's. He was fairly certain they'd both get a kick out of snooping around the man's house while he was away. But Will was nervous that Hannibal would say something to Beverly when he got back— maybe mentioning the car, the attack, the fact that Will was fucking homeless. He didn't want to risk it.

Besides, he comforted himself, it was always more fun snooping alone. So, he walked back to the apartment, his body shivering. He held himself tight, hunched over hoping to starve off the cold and not run into anyone. He fumbled with the key when he arrived, finding it strange to unlock a door that wasn't his own. Once inside, he immediately locked the door, the back of his neck prickling at the thought of someone following him inside. Will shivered thinking about the man who had assaulted him. Following him, grabbing him, kissing him.

He bolted the door for extra measure.

Now feeling somewhat secure, he meandered around the first floor. Poking in cabinets and opening drawers. He found the man's drawing supplies in a dark oak desk. Hannibal was fucking talented, the landscapes looking entirely too real in their lead colors. There were portraits too. Lifelike drawings of people, rendered in grayscale. He wanted to sit and marvel at them, but there was a whole house to explore.

He went through every drawer in the kitchen. Familiarizing himself with where all the dishes were kept. He grabbed himself an apple for a snack that Hannibal had been sure lay out for him this morning.

'You can eat anything in the kitchen you'd like' Hannibal had said. A statement Will didn't fully believe. He opened Hannibal's fridge. The man was a carnivore for sure. Airsealed packages of assorted meat were stacked on the shelves and the freezer. Not just the normal ground beef or year old hotdogs, no it was strange food all meticulously labeled. Cow brain, pig heart, kidneys, livers, tongue. Will had never tried half the food Hannibal had— he stuck with his apple.

He wandered upstairs, taking several minutes to admire the whole samurai armor displayed outside the bedrooms. It was so obnoxious yet entirely Hannibal, Will couldn't help but smile at it. He wondered if Hannibal would let him hold the katana, he'd have get a lot of courage to ask the student.

After inspecting the rest of the house, he stood outside Hannibal's bedroom door, trying to build up the courage to snoop inside. He wanted to learn more about him, but this was risky and honestly, probably a very bad idea. Hannibal might get mad if he invaded his space (*more than he's already invaded it...*). He had his hand on the doorknob contemplating turning it, when the front door downstairs opened.

He dropped his hand and rushed downstairs, taking the steps two at a time. He met Hannibal at the bottom of the stairs, his face flush and palms sweaty. Hannibal was just shrugging off his coat and hanging it. He gave Will a curious look, "Are you alright?"

"Yes," Will said a bit too fast. He swallowed, catching his breath, "I heard you come in. You're early."

"Yes my class got out sooner than normal," Hannibal was scrutinizing his state as if he could tell Will had been snooping around, but he didn't ask, "Have you eaten?"

"An apple- thanks."

"Anything else?"

Will shook his head no.

Hannibal sighed, "That's not nearly enough. There's enough time to make dinner."

Will followed Hannibal to the kitchen. Wincing when he realized he left a couple of the cabinets wide opened. Hannibal didn't say anything about it though. He began pulling out ingredients, and Will was grateful there was no strange meat in the dish. He sat on the stool to watch, fidgeting nervously.

"I talked to Beverly today."

"Oh?"

"I told her I got mugged."

Hannibal looked surprised yet pleased and Will didn't want to think about how that made his whole body flush. "I'm glad you told her. How did she react?"

"Eh, she was upset. Said I'm an idiot."

Hannibal smirked.

"But not a stupid idiot anyway. That's because I told her I'm staying with you for a bit until I can find a different apartment."

Hannibal raised his eyebrow, "A different apartment?"

"I didn't tell her about the car and stuff."

"Are you planning to?" Hannibal asked evenly, his voice betraying no sign of anger or frustration.

"Eh, no. I don't want to. I'd appreciate it if you didn't either." Will said quietly, not meeting Hannibal's eyes.

"Honesty is better, Will."

Will scrunched his nose, "I know. I'm just not ready to be that honest, ok?"

Hannibal nodded, "I won't tell her."

Will sighed in relief. "Thanks Hannibal."

Hannibal came to stand in front of him, gently pulling him around to face him. The man's long fingers cupped Will's cheek, stuttering Will's breathing. "I would never do anything to hurt you."

Will didn't really believe him, but the words were nice to hear. Even more so, the way Hannibal held his face like it was genuinely the most important thing he's touched. It made Will's heart pound. Will's eyes darted up to look at Hannibal, and low and behold, Hannibal was staring at his lips again.

Will licked his lips nervously and watched as Hannibal's eyes dilated in interest. "Eh, Hannibal?"

Hannibal's intense gaze met his, "Yes?"

"Do you want to kiss me?" Will blurted out, and blushing as soon as he said it.

Hannibal pulled away to study him, his hands falling from Will's face to lightly grasp his shoulders. Hannibal looked a bit taken aback, but he recovered quickly. A mask covering his surprised face and schooling it into a blank expression. Will hated how easily Hannibal retreated.

"Would you like me to kiss you?" Hannibal said after a moment.

Will rolled his eyes, "You can't answer a question with another question."

"But my answer depends entirely on your answer," Hannibal cracked a small smile, which Will drank up. He liked every expression Hannibal gave him, but his smiles were probably his favorite.

Will smile sweetly, "It shouldn't change your answer. It's what you want Hannibal, not what I want. I don't matter."

Hannibal's brow furrowed slightly and his hands left Will's shoulders leaving him feeling immediately cold and alone. Hannibal made his way back to the stove where a pot of water was beginning to simmer.

Will felt confused- why did he just walk away? Why didn't Hannibal say what he wanted? It would make this much easier. He slid off the stool, feeling bold, and went and stood beside Hannibal. Hannibal was refusing to look at him and Will huffed in frustration. Lack of eye contact was his speciality, *not Hannibal's* . Will urged Hannibal for a reaction, "It's what you want Hannibal, it's not a big deal."

Hannibal stirred the water. He looked sad. Will hugged himself tightly. He had somehow upset him. He was going to lose his friend and it was all his fault. *You fucking idiot.*

"Do you hear the words you're saying, Will?" Hannibal asked, his voice low and tight. Hannibal was looking at him now. He was angry, Will realized. *You made your friend angry. Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!*

Will shrunk under his gaze, "I-I don't- I-" He dropped his gaze, dejected, "I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean."

Hannibal sighed, "Of course you don't."

Will felt his insides start to curl. He wished he could melt into the floor away from here. He began to tremble. *You're so fucking weak* . He whispered, "I'm sorry, Hannibal."

Will was yanked from his thoughts as Hannibal pulled him into a hug. Will gasped, startled and still a little scared.

"Wh-what are you doing?" Will managed, crushed as he was against the man.

"I'm going to make you take back those words," Hannibal said clearly.

Will bit his lip. He should have never brought up kissing to begin with. It was stupid. He was an idiot for even mentioning it.

"I'm sorry for asking about kissing, it was super inappropriate."

"Not that."

Will was confused. He couldn't think of what he said that made Hannibal so upset. He shifted, thankfully Hannibal let him, and he nervously managed to lean a bit away, with his hands resting lightly on Hannibal's forearms. Hannibal's sturdy hands still held him fast. They were so close, Will would be freaking out more if he wasn't so confused.

"I didn't mean to make you upset." Will looked away, attempting to scoot away, but Hannibal wouldn't let him. He hoped Hannibal would take the apology and they could be done with this. But Hannibal's grip just tightened on him. His heart beat increased as his panic crept up.

"It upsets me that you don't see it."

"Then tell me!" Will begged, desperately wanting to get away.

"You said you didn't matter, Will."

Will froze, stunned and a little annoyed that *that* was what Hannibal was upset about. He huffed and tried to shove him away, "I don't matter. It's not a big d—"

Hannibal held on to him. Will pushed against him again, "Stop it, Hannibal"

But Hannibal wouldn't. He pressed Will against the counter. Trapping him.

"Hannibal!"

"I don't want to hear you ever say those words again."

Will still. Trying his best not to follow his urge to sucker punch Hannibal in the gut. Hannibal was genuinely upset which was annoying because Will would be happy with the vulnerability if it didn't have to do with him. He had said those words to try and ease Hannibal into admitting he wanted to kiss him. To actually kiss him maybe. Will knew the man wanted to. He could see Hannibal's longing, he'd have to be blind not to. And yet he pushed, and here he was getting muscled around because of it. He should be more angry at Hannibal for dictating rules and somehow trying to make him 'take back his words'. But then again, it was sweet in a messed up sort of way. And Will was used to messed up love. Will decided to cave this time. After all, it was his fault for pushing to begin with.

He tapped Hannibal's arm lightly, "Ok, I get it Mr. Macho."

But Hannibal didn't let him go. Will sighed. Damn, it was annoying having someone be so fiercely protective. Nevertheless, he tried again, "I'm sorry, Hannibal. I won't say it again."

Hannibal still didn't let go, but he shifted and looked at Will directly, "Somehow, I don't believe you."

Will sighed, "Well, you can't read my thoughts so my word is all you're gonna get."

Hannibal looked rather annoyed at that. He probably would love to read Will's mind just to yell at him over all his self loathing thoughts. What an asshole.

"I'll take your word for it then." Hannibal promised, though he still didn't let Will go.

"Eh, Hannibal?"

"Yes?"

"The water's boiling."

Hannibal reached over and flipped the stove off, without giving Will an inch to escape. *The bastard*. He leaned back into Will's space, studying him with care.

"You gonna keep me trapped here all day?" Will mocked, though his voice was a little pitched with stress. He was getting a sense the more he struggled the less likely he was to get out of this. Hannibal was bigger than him, stronger. Will found it half terrifying and half hot as fuck. What was wrong with him?

"It's tempting, but no," Hannibal smiled and his hand came up and traced Will's chin. "I was thinking about kissing you."

Will gasped softly. He hadn't realized they were returning to that subject. He kinda hoped it would go die in a grave alone. But Hannibal's thumb was running over his bottom lip, making his face go slack. Hannibal watched him intently. His eyes scouring his face.

"I would love to kiss you, Will. That's the answer to your question: I want to. Even though you knew it all along. Didn't you?"

Will swallowed, at a loss for words. Hannibal grinned, "You're smart. Clever and bright. You could see through me as easily as you see your surroundings. You're much too clever for me. My only question would be, why?"

"Why?"

"Why bother asking if you already knew?"

Will swallowed and Hannibal's eyes watched the movement as if mesmerized.

"Uh, I don't know."

"I highly doubt that, you know exactly why," Hannibal said with certainty.

"I do?"

"Yes, though I can only make some educated guesses myself on why," He stroked Will's jaw, "You may have asked me, if you were uncomfortable with my advances. Your question signaling to me to withdraw and not pursue you. To give you space."

Will's brow furrowed. He was not sure if that was what he wanted, but Hannibal put it so nicely that Will probably wouldn't feel bad about choosing that option. It was safe, even if it wasn't entirely true.

"Or," Hannibal continued softly, "You asked because you were intrigued by the advances. That you might be open to the possibility of me kissing you or discussing kissing you. Tell me Will, which was it? Or have I read the situation entirely wrong?"

Will licked his lips nervously. His goal had been to egg Hannibal into admitting his attraction. He didn't know if he really wanted him to act up on it. He could admit to himself that he was attracted to the older student, but that didn't mean he wasn't terrified out of his mind about what that could mean.

Did he want Hannibal to kiss him? Suddenly, his words of 'I don't matter' came ringing back to him. He was a little shocked to find he honestly believed it. He didn't matter, or he had never mattered before. So much so, he never really considered what he wanted.

Did he want Hannibal to kiss him?

Hannibal was so warm pressed against him. His sturdy chest and powerful arms holding him in place. Hannibal could push him around and there wasn't much Will could do about it. Did he like that? Was it terrifying or exhilarating? Did he want Hannibal to kiss him? Did he want everything that would come with it? What would come with it? Did he even know? Did he want to know?

"I-I- I don't know," Will admitted with some defeat in his voice.

Hannibal fingers stroked his chin, "What do you want, Will?"

"I don't- I don't know-," Will worried, "I've never done something like this."

He didn't know what to do, but Hannibal seemed to. He took his hand and kissed it. Will could feel the light wetness from his lips brush his knuckles. Hannibal squeezed his hand reassuringly before letting it go and stepping back.

"I'm sorry, Will. You don't have to decide."

"I feel like I do though," Will stressed.

"You don't. You don't need to do or say anything. I'm sorry for pushing you."

"But you didn't!" Will protested, "I was the one that asked."

"Will--"

"I've made everything weird. It's my fault"

"It's not."

"It is. I'm really sorry. Fuck."

"You don't need to apologize, let's forget the whole thing." Hannibal said calmly, but Will knew he wouldn't be able to. It would eat him up inside.

"No."

Hannibal gave him a questioning look.

"I don't want to," He said impulsively.

Hannibal's eyes flashed, jumping on his words, "What do you want then?"

Will swallowed hard. That was the whole deal. He didn't know what he wanted. And he was terrified of finding out. If only he could sample it. Just to see if he really liked it. He glanced at Hannibal, suddenly wondering if Hannibal would let him. The older man cocked his head to the side giving him a curious look.

"I wanna try it," Will rushed to explain, "Just try it, I don't know if I'm ready for anything like you are."

He knew Hannibal wanted more, he had read it on his face. Could he settle with Will where he was?

Hannibal's expression softened and he nodded, "Whatever you'd like, Will."

Will swallowed not entirely sure what he was getting himself into. He took a nervous step forward. Hannibal followed and brought their faces near. Their noses met in a gentle touch, but it felt electric to Will. Will gasped and he felt his warm breath between their faces, Hannibal's own breath tickling his lips.

"Do you want this?" Hannibal asked oh so gently.

"Yes," Will whispered, tilting his head back as Hannibal pressed his lips against his. Hannibal's mouth was warm around his, and Will wanted to taste him, feel him, everything.

Hannibal took a breath, "Is this alright, Will?"

"Yes, please more," Will murmured as he leaned into the next kiss, opening his mouth and inviting Hannibal in. Hannibal obliged, his tongue exploring gently. Will moaned and clutched at Hannibal's shoulders, certain he would melt under the careful attention.

Because Hannibal was so careful and gentle. He didn't demand anything and Will loved it. He could probably get high on Hannibal's kisses the way his brain fired the lovely and enthralling sensations throughout his body.

Hannibal slowly pulled away, and Will chased after his mouth. After just a taste of Hannibal's mouth, Will desperately wanted more. He whined in the back of his throat trying to reach Hannibal again. Hannibal didn't make him wait, he leaned into the kiss, his hands wrapping around Will's waist. He was lifted up on the counter. He let out an undignified squeak, before Hannibal was back to kissing him.

"Ha-Hannibal," Will gasped when the older student kissed his jaw, moving down his neck, his mouth was on his collar-

"Ha-Han--"

The man's hands were slipping up and under his shirt, fingers grazed the skin on his belly.

"Stop!"

Will shoved Hannibal away. He wildly tugged down on his shirt, ensuring he was completely covered. He had a sudden sweat on his pallor skin, his breath was quickened and short, not from making out.

Hannibal stood away, looking very abash.

Shit.

Will slid off the counter, hugging himself tightly, "Sorry," He muttered.

“Don’t be sorry, Will. I’m sorry,” Hannibal soothed, “I should have asked you.”

Will nodded, “Eh, I guess, but I didn’t mean to shove you.”

Hannibal shrugged, “I can take it.”

Will hummed non-committedly. He wanted to escape this awkward situation. He was really dreading trying to explain *why* he didn’t want to be touched like that.

But Hannibal didn’t ask him any personal questions. Just, “Are you alright? Would you like some water?”

Will nodded, still holding himself tightly, “Water’d be nice.”

Hannibal quickly got him a glass, Will chugged it.

“I am sorry,” Hannibal repeated, looking even more morose than he had been, “I suppose I thought you were enjoying it and wanted more. I thought wrong. I wish I had your empathy.”

Hannibal gave him a pained smile, and Will knew he was being honest, he hadn’t intentionally tried to do anything bad. He wasn’t trying to hurt him. Hannibal had in fact wanted him to feel good. Will sighed, annoyed at his confused mind, “I—I was enjoying it, but then, then it just got too much.”

Hannibal nodded soberly, “I’m sorry. I’ll ask you if it’s ok before I do anything again... That is, if you’d even want to do it again.”

Will nervously bit his lip, liking the idea of kissing Hannibal again immensely, “I guess if you’d want to.”

Hannibal smiled then, “I would like that.”

“Then I’d be open to it,” Will agreed blushing and looking away. He thought Hannibal might lean in then and kiss him again, but Hannibal just grinned at him, with his toothy smile and moved to the food.

“Good. Now, do you like spaghetti?”

Will let himself relax, they were done kissing for the night. Will was a bit relieved. He could probably make out with Hannibal all night, but he liked it better slow. He could think about things, really contemplate his decisions.

“Yeah, like it with meat balls and lots of cheese.”

“A true connoisseur,” Hannibal winked at him, “Would you help me grate the cheese?”

“Sure,” Will said with a shy smile on his face. Hannibal smiled back at him, and it was almost better than a kiss. He drank up the attention. Perhaps asking for what he wanted wasn’t so bad.

Chapter End Notes

Rewrote this chapter, hope ya'll like it :)

Gasping for the warm summer breeze

It had been three weeks. Will was eating actual meals, sleeping more than three hours a night, and managing his studies. There was color on his face. He didn't feel exhausted all the time or have unending headaches. He felt good, and he had Hannibal to thank for it.

Sweet Hannibal, who made sure he ate three meals a day, gave him a roof over his head, wanted to talk long into the night about psychology and forensics, and sometimes, sometimes, asked to hug Will or hold his hand. He never asked to kiss Will, and the younger student knew it was because Hannibal was waiting for him to initiate it. If Will wanted a kiss, he'd have to really really want one. It took a lot of wanting and courage to even ask. So, Will had gone un-kissed for the past few weeks. He couldn't bring himself to ask, it was too overwhelming to even think about.

It was Friday, and all Will had to do was go to a shift at the hardware store and he'd be free the *whole* next day. The coffee shop was closed because of some special event happening and he wasn't scheduled at the hardware store. He could not wait to be lazy in bed on a Saturday morning. Hannibal knew he was looking forward to it and promised not to bother him before ten. Will assumed the older student had some devious plan involving breakfast food and Will after ten, but Will didn't mind.

Will smiled sheepishly thinking about Hannibal preparing him breakfast. Will tried to refuse all the food Hannibal made, but Hannibal was persistent and his cooking was delicious. Will was doomed at the first spoonful.

The car rolled smoothly to a stop outside the hardware store. Hannibal was still insisting on driving him everywhere. So, there they were driving to the store with dinner sitting nicely in Will's stomach.

Hannibal was scowling at the store. He made no efforts in hiding his displeasure at Will's current employment. He was less hard on the coffee shop, but the hardware store had none of his love. He continuously told Will that the hard labor was wearing him out. Will took it as a personal challenge to keep up, just to prove Hannibal wrong.

"You could always quit," Hannibal mumbled, he was particularly feisty because Will's work had interrupted them sitting (definitely not cuddling) together on the couch. It had been an insanely intimate moment that Will thought would lead to possible kissing. He had been half-grateful and half-disappointed when they were interrupted for work.

"Somebody has to bring home the dough," Will retorted, knowing full well that Hannibal had so many investments and bonds coming in, he never had to work a day in his life. Rich fucking asshole.

Hannibal sighed long-sufferingly, "You work too hard."

Will grinned slyly, "And you're too lazy."

Hannibal raised an eyebrow and Will chortled with laughter. Hannibal was definitely not lazy, he just did whatever he wanted. He filled his day working on his 'special projects' as Will called them: drawing, cooking, composing. It seemed to Will like studying was the least of Hannibal's concerns. The man just excelled at everything. Will, on the other hand, was barely keeping his head afloat. He spent hours studying every minute he wasn't working. He envied Hannibal's work ethic and skill to balance school and whatever weird projects he always had going on. He felt he really only saw Hannibal when the man was chauffeuring him to places or the quiet times at night when Hannibal always wanted to sit and chat. Another reason why no kissing was taking place, Will was just too busy!

It made work's interruptions all the more annoying. Will wanted to spend time with Hannibal, but he knew he had to work. He had to get his own place, fix his car, and be a contributing member of society.

"Should I pick you up at 11?" Hannibal asked, seeming to regretfully accept Will was not quitting.

"I can walk," Will answered. That's how he always answered, but Hannibal always showed up anyway.

Hannibal leaned over and slowly, clearly broadcasting his movements, took Will's hand, gently squeezing, "I'll pick you up. Be safe."

Will wanted to kiss him then and there, but settled with a nodded, "Ok."

"I have something for you. I want you to have this." From the back seat Hannibal pulled out a dark wool coat. Will looked in surprise. Hannibal was holding the coat out to him. A gift.

Another gift.

It had been three weeks at Hannibal's and Will felt like a king. Every need was covered, every desire met. He had a soft warm bed, a fridge filled with food, and safety from strangers at night. It was golden and all because Hannibal fucking Lecter was smitten with him. The man took him under his wing. He made sure Will ate. Made sure he got to class. Every day he asked how he slept. And he would sometimes hug him so softly, it made Will wonder why he was ever scared of being touched.

The only disadvantage to the situation was Hannibal's absurdly inappropriate gifts to Will. The man tried to buy Will clothes, he tried giving him money and gift cards, he'd even come close to buying him a book that Will had stared at for a second too long. It was ridiculous. Will did not want Hannibal to buy him things. He already owed the man so much. However, his refusal of the gifts only made Hannibal more persistent and less forthright with everything he gave. Will found new clothes in his closet, shoes, ties, watches hidden in clever places. He had thrown them back at Hannibal, but Hannibal just shrugged and told him if he didn't want them he could just throw them away.

Will hated wasting them. It would be a crime to just throw all the brand new things away. Instead he kept them in his closet. Not daring to touch or even look at them. Hannibal seemed

to notice, and stopped going overboard, though at times a pair of new socks would appear in his laundry.

So Hannibal offering a coat outright, it was a surprise. Not cleverly hung from a hook in his room or resting on his seat in psychology. He just gave it to him. But that was still too much. Besides Will was planning on buying his own coat.

So he shook his head, "No thanks, I'm good."

Hannibal held it out again, "It's getting cold out. I'd prefer you to have a coat."

Will shook his head again, "I'm going to get one soon from the coat drive."

Hannibal scrunched his nose, "Will, you have no idea where those clothes come from."

Will snorted. All his clothes were second hand. "You telling me you don't like thrifting?"

Hannibal looked annoyed but persisted, "If you know where they come from. It's fine. This is one of my old coats. It doesn't fit me any more. I want you to have it."

Will blinked in surprise, "This is yours?"

"Yes. It was. Does that suit your thrifting needs?" Hannibal teased. Will sheepishly took the coat. As long as the man didn't buy it for him, it would be ok. And he kind of liked the idea of wearing something of Hannibal's. It would be like the man was hugging him all the time. That sent butterflies flying in his stomach.

"You sure you don't need it?" Will asked nervously, running his finger across the thick wool fabric, loving it already.

"It doesn't fit me, Will. It has been hanging in my closet useless until now. Please take it."

Will nodded, "Ok."

He climbed out of the car and though the building was only a few yards away, he pulled the coat on. It fit like a hug, though the arms were long and past his fingers. He wouldn't admit it, but it was good to feel warm and he could smell Hannibal all around him. He watched as Hannibal's smile grew through the car window's opening. Will felt like he should do something. It felt right to do something. His hands lightly grabbed the window's edge and he leaned inside, quickly pecking Hannibal on the cheek. Hannibal looked a little surprised but delighted all the same. His hand covered Will's.

"Darling, what was that for?" He asked softly as if not to scare Will away.

Will blushed, "Uh, I just wanted to kiss you."

"You are a wonder," Hannibal's eyes were full of admiration, "I can never predict you, Will Graham."

His hands clung to Will's, "Come home with me? I want to make you tiramisu and we can read by the fire together."

Will smiled but shook his head, "You're being sentimental. I need to work."

Hannibal sighed again, and Will knew if he stayed a second longer he might just cave. So, he pushed away from the car window, waving goodbye, and trudged inside the cold building.

He left Hannibal's coat on, knowing he'd be cold from the open unloading dock. Mr. Gillespie barked some instructions at him from behind his desk when he passed his office. Will went to the back preparing to unload all the boxes and get them out on the shelves. Mr. Gillespie had left him practically a whole truck load to shelve. Will sighed. This would take the whole shift if not more. Hannibal would pick him up at 11pm and Will already couldn't wait to leave.

He began his arduous task, trekking back and forth from the store room to the sale floor, hauling wood, pipes, and tools out to their places.

As he was pulling a cart from the back room, a voice made him freeze in his spot. He turned to look, not wanting to believe his ears.

Through the aisles, he spotted the man from the bar. The one who had grabbed him and kissed him. The one who refused to listen when he said no. Will fled back into the storage room. He pressed himself against the wall, terrified that the man had seen him. Suddenly all the warm feelings from the past weeks were gone. He was reminded why he lived in fear. Why he had fled the south in the first place.

He felt his chest constrict. He couldn't breathe. His legs gave out and he slid to the ground, managing to stay pressed against the wall. He could hear the man coming closer. He clamped his hand over his mouth, praying he wouldn't cry out and give away his hiding spot.

The man passed, speaking loudly as if on a phone. Will didn't understand what the man was saying. All he could hear in his mind was the man demanding him to kiss him. His body was paralyzed and his mind felt muddy.

The voice faded, only for the door to be thrown wide open. Will cried in alarm and it took him a moment to realize it was Mr. Gillespie standing in front of him. The big man scowled at him from above, "What the hell are you doing?"

Will opened his mouth to respond, but nothing came out. His boss scoffed and Will thought the man was about to kick him and he flinched raising his hands to shield his face. But Gillespie just barked an order, "A customer just bought some piping, go help him load it up."

Will managed to nod, and Mr. Gillespie turned and left. Will struggled to his feet. He knew he had to go out there. He had to keep working. Maybe the man wouldn't see him. If he did, maybe he wouldn't recognize him. His clothes were clean, he didn't stink, and besides the man had been drunk that night. He wouldn't remember. Will tried to assure himself of this as he clutched his arms around himself.

He slowly emerged from the backroom. Mr. Gillespie was laughing with *the* man. He spotted him, "There's the kid. Come on, load these on this guy's truck."

Will watched as the customer's eyes widened with recognition. The bruise where Hannibal had punched him was faded but visible and made his face look tinged green. The man grinned manically and Will froze. Mr. Gillespie frowned and shoved Will forward, "Get going."

"Yeah," The dangerous man agreed, "Let's go."

Will swallowed, terrified, but picked up the long piping and carried it out. The man followed behind him, watching him closely. Will could feel the malice eyes boring into him. He wished Mr. Gillespie had followed him out, but the boss man had just headed back to his grimy little office, leaving Will alone with the maniac. As soon as the pipes were in the truck, the man grabbed Will, pushing him hard against the edge of the truck bed. The metal scraped his back through the thick coat and he cried out in pain.

"You fucking bitch— Didn't think I'd remember you, huh?" Then shoved him hard.

Will's back was slammed once more against the sharp metal and he felt it cut into his back. His cry was cut short when the man slapped him. Will felt dizzy and confused. Why was he letting this man do this to him? Why couldn't he fight back?

The man was gripping his hair hard and Will realized he hadn't been listening to the man's rant, "...You fucking earned it. You're gonna pay, and no fucking boyfriend is gonna show up for you this time."

Will stared at the man, his eyes wide with fear. Thankfully another car pulled into the lot and the man shoved Will away with disgust, "I'll be back."

Will stumbled away hurriedly. He didn't even pay attention as the beat up truck pulled away. He rushed inside, his only thought was to get away from that horrible man. He hid himself in the storage room, shaking and barely breathing from the ordeal. He knew he had to get away. It was only a matter of time before that monster found him. Will wanted to run but he was too afraid to leave. What if the man was waiting outside? What if he drove up on him and pulled him into his truck? No, Will could not leave the store, it was too dangerous.

He leaned against the wall, overcome with hopelessness. A sharp pain shot through his back. He jolted upright and reached behind his back. His new coat was torn. He slipped his hand under his shirt. He was bleeding. The metal of the truck had scraped his skin back, making droplets of blood form slowly. His fingers brushed over the old scar on his back. The blistered and chard skin that would never heal.

He jerked his hand away as terrible memories of *him* flooded his mind. He shook his head, he would not be plagued by two monsters at the same time. He had to get out of this place. And to do that he needed a car. He needed Hannibal to come get him. He had to call Hannibal. .

Before he could change his mind or sink into despair, he stumbled to Mr. Gillespie's office. He barged in, his boss looked surprised. Frankly, Will was surprised himself.

"What is it?" Gillespie huffed.

"I need to use your phone."

"Why?"

"I cut myself loading those pipes. I need to go home." Will stuck out his bloody fingers, emphasizing his point.

The man wrinkled his nose in disgust, "Jesus, get that out of my face." He waved at some napkins sitting on his desk, "Wipe your hands and then you can use the phone. Fucking hell, kid, this is coming out of your paycheck."

Will didn't have the energy or time to think about what that meant. He just rushed to wipe the blood away as Mr. Gillespie left the office angrily. Will grabbed the phone and smashed the numbers in that Hannibal had made him repeat until he memorized them.

The phone rang once. Twice. Will held his breath praying Hannibal would answer.

"Hello?"

"Hannibal!" Will gasped, clutching the phone close. He was so relieved he wanted to cry.

"Will? Will, what's wrong? Why are you calling?"

"Can you pick me up?"

"Where are you? The store?" Hannibal asked sharply and Will could hear the older student already moving.

"The store."

"I'm on my way, are you ok?"

"I'm ok," Will lied.

"What happened?" He demanded.

"I—I dunno— I just—" Will's voice quavered and he knew if he said anything, he would start crying.

"Will. It's alright. I'm coming, just stay where you are, I'll be there in a few minutes."

Will hung up before he could let out a choked cry. He covered his mouth, willing the emotions to simmer down. He wiped his eyes, taking a deep breath before leaving the office.

*

Hannibal sped to the store, breaking several traffic regulations without caring. He was anxious about Will. Will had never called him before. The younger man barely asked for anything from him. To hear him so frightened and broken on the phone was alarming. He

pulled into a parking spot and leaped from the car. He rushed inside looking all around for Will. He finally found him hunched by the lumber.

"Will," was the only warning Hannibal gave before embracing him.

Will jerked at the sudden touch. Hannibal pulled away immediately, remembering himself just as Will flinched and broke away. He was shaking and his eyes looked watery and red.

"What's wrong Will?" Hannibal asked gently. The boy seemed on the edge of a breakdown.

"Can we go, please?" A small watery voice begged.

Hannibal frowned. He gently pulled Will's face up to look him over. Will was avoiding his gaze looking around as if watching for something to jump out. There was a red mark on his cheek. Hannibal's fingers grazed across it, "What happened?"

Will pulled away from his grasp, his hand gingerly covering the mark. "Got hit," he muttered.

Hannibal's eyes widened and he stepped forward, but Will retreated a step staying out of his space.

"Who hit you?" Hannibal asked.

Will shook his head as if fighting off bad memories. He hugged himself, "Can we go? I'm bleeding."

Hannibal's nostrils flared, and sure enough he could smell blood, "You're bleeding?"

"It's okay, I think it stopped—"

"Will! Where are you hurt?" Hannibal demanded, trying to show patience before he threw Will over his shoulder and hauled him home.

"My back—" Hannibal made a movement as if to reach behind him, but Will flinched and retreated, "Don't touch me, we just need to go."

"Will—"

"We have to go before he comes back," Will pleaded.

"Who comes back?"

"That guy."

"What guy?"

"The guy..." Will trailed off. His face was flushed and he looked embarrassed and ashamed.

Hannibal wanted to shake him to make him speak. Instead he spoke as calmly as he could, "It's ok, Will. You can tell me."

Will bit his lip, not making eye contact, "The guy from the bar, the one, the one that—that—you know..."

Hannibal could feel the anger rising inside him. Will's attacker had hurt him again. That vile pig had touched his Will. He could feel his energy increasing. He wanted to wring the man's neck, rend him limb from limb.

"Why was he here?" Hannibal asked darkly.

"I dunno, bought stuff. Saw me." Will seemed to be shutting down. His eyes had gone glassy, and he was no longer fidgeting nervously. He stood like a shell.

This was no time to be plotting vengeance. Hannibal took Will's hand and led him out of the store. Will shuffled along, thankfully not fighting Hannibal. Hannibal scanned the parking lot, but didn't see any suspicious vehicles. He opened the passenger door and Will slumped inside. Hannibal quickly drove them back home, Will was still slumped against the car door not moving. The poor dear was in shock. He helped Will from the car, guiding him upstairs to his room. Will stood still once they were in the room.

Hannibal noted the tear in the coat. The tear was jagged as if ripped by a piece of metal. Hannibal gently put his hand on Will's shoulders, not wanting to spook the younger man.

"I'm going to take your coat off, Will," Hannibal said gently. Will didn't respond, so Hannibal began to pull the coat down Will's frail arms. The coat was off and Hannibal moved around to inspect the wound. The shirt had surprisingly not torn, but was stained through with blood. Hannibal lightly took the edge of the shirt to lift, but Will jerked away.

He spun around, awakened from his trance angry and distraught, "What are you doing?"

"Will, you're bleeding. Please let me look at it."

"No!" Will yelled furiously. He pulled the shirt close against his body, refusing to remove the clothing.

Hannibal considered manhandling Will out of the shirt, but Will looked ready to kill. While Hannibal would love to see Will feral with fury, he was more worried about the injury. He raised his hands in surrender, "You need to clean the cut. Would you like my help?"

Will paled and he shuffled away, "No. I can do it myself."

Hannibal wanted to convince him it was foolishness to try to mend a wound on his back by himself, but he contained himself to an unhappy sigh, "Fine. I'll get the supplies."

Will's face fell, even though Hannibal was giving him exactly what he wanted. Hannibal wished Will would let him help him, but he did what he could and quickly got the supplies. If Will didn't want his help, he wouldn't push. The younger man needed to learn to trust him. Will needed everything slow and Hannibal wouldn't push him. He handed him the first aid kit, "Let me know if you need help."

Will looked apologetic, but he didn't say anything. He disappeared into the bathroom. Hannibal sat on the edge of the bed and waited. Trying to ignore the little gasps of pain from behind the bathroom door. He took the coat in hand as a distraction, inspecting it. His fingers worrying over the tear. He winced, imagining the force it would take to rip the coat.

"I'm really sorry," Will surprised him, standing in the open door with a clean flannel on, looking at the coat sorrowfully.

Hannibal dropped the coat and stood, going to Will, "Don't apologize. The coat doesn't matter."

Will frowned, crossing his arms, "It mattered to me. I'm sorry for ruining it."

Hannibal shook his head, "It is not your fault."

Will stared at his feet. Hannibal wanted to hug him and show him just how much it wasn't his fault. But he elected for a less invasive approach, "I'm worried about the cut. Did you get it bandaged?"

Will nodded and shuffled his feet, "Yeah. Thanks. I'm sorry for yelling. I'm just not comfortable with you seeing me like— like that."

Hannibal was about to retort that he had already seen Will injured, but realized the younger man was referring to something else. Hannibal had never seen Will bare. Will was a very private person. Hannibal remembered the first time meeting him, the worried and anxious voice hiding behind a shower curtain. Even then Will had been very shy, hiding his body and skin from view. In fact Hannibal wasn't sure he had seen the young man in any short sleeved shirts or shorts. Will wore his hoodie and flannels religiously. There was no question, Will did not want to be seen or touched. The question was: why?

"There's no need to apologize," Hannibal assured him, "I would yell too if I saw that awful man again."

Will looked relieved.

"Would you like to talk about it?" Hannibal gestured for Will to sit. Will hesitantly went. He perched on the edge of the bed, fidgeting like he was about to fly.

Hannibal boldly sat next to him, taking his hand, "I'm sorry he hurt you."

Will bit his lip, "I didn't really know what to do."

Hannibal squeezed his hand, "Our minds often go into survival mode. Our fight or flight, trying to keep us safe."

Will frowned, "I didn't fight or run away. I just stayed there. It was like I couldn't do anything, even though I knew he was going to hurt me."

"Trauma can make one panic. You probably experienced a panic attack."

"I feel useless. I can't defend myself. Everyone just walks all over me." Will slumped, his head falling on Hannibal's shoulder. Hannibal focused on the sensation of Will's body against his, sealing the memory in his mind palace. He wrapped his arm around Will's shoulders, letting the younger man rest against him.

"My darling mongoose, you are not useless. We could hunt that man down and pay him back ten times over for what he did to you."

Will snorted, "Like mafia style intimidation?"

Hannibal smiled, "Yes, or just good old fashioned revenge."

"I'd like a chance to pummel his fucking face," Will whispered viciously. Hannibal's heart rate increased, he itched to see Will free. To see him set wild on some unfortunate prey.

"I'd want to see you do it," Hannibal whispered in his hair, "I want you covered in his blood. Taking what you deserve, revenge in its sweetest, bloodiest form. I want to see you standing tall over his crumpled dead body."

Will gasped, tensing in his arms, "I—I don't— I think that's— That's a lot for revenge."

Hannibal forced himself to rein in the over excited thoughts of Will killing and murdering. *He would be glorious and beautiful.* Even though Will would be masterful, the young man was not quite ready for Hannibal's murder-filled fantasies. Slowly. Everything must be taken slowly with Will.

"I apologize Will. I find myself overstepping. I only wish for you to be safe. And if that man disappears from the face of the earth, I would not mourn."

Will relaxed, snuggling closer, "I don't think I'd be sad either."

Hannibal pressed his lips to the top of Will's head. His mongoose would not mourn. Hannibal decided then and there, he would hunt the man down for his mongoose. Will would never have to know, but that man was never touching Will again.

*

Will fell asleep in his arms. Hannibal tucked him in bed, careful to lay him on his side. He smoothed down Will's curls and left Will asleep safe in the house.

He drove straight to the hardware store, pulling off into an alley across from the store. It was barely 9pm, and Will had said the man was planning to return.

Hannibal would be ready for him.

At around ten that night, the store had closed, and the parking lot was dark. An old truck pulled in. The culprit jumped out and tried the store doors. They were locked. He cursed and went back to his car. He hadn't noticed the dark figure slip into his truck. He reached to start the engine, but a gloved fist struck him across the head knocking him unconscious.

Hannibal shifted the pig to the passenger seat then started the car. He'd drive out to the country and then have some fun with the pig before mercifully ending the pathetic life.

His only regret was Will wasn't there to witness it.

Freedom is like a kite

Will woke pleasantly. He was warm and safe under the thick duvets and his face was resting on the soft feather pillows. He could smell something cooking, the savory smells wafting up from the kitchen. It smelled so good, it made Will's stomach rumble.

He rolled out of bed ignoring the tinge of pain from his back and headed downstairs. He was greeted by the lovely sight of Hannibal cooking. His black button up was stretched nicely across those broad shoulders and the sleeves were rolled up to display his lean muscular forearms. A white apron was cinched around his waist, highlighting his narrow hips, and ass hugged by fine brown trousers. Damn, if he wasn't drooling from the food, Will sure was now over Hannibal.

Hannibal glanced over his shoulder, winking at the boy in his crumpled slept in clothes. "Like what you see?" He asked playfully.

Will reddened and chose to ignore the undeniably sexy man, "Like what I smell. What are you cooking?"

Hannibal waved him over to the stove top. Will went, immediately caught by the taller man's arms. He let Hannibal pull him close, chest to chest. He bit his lip nervously, looking at Hannibal's delectable mouth.

He's so kissable. Will wanted to kiss him desperately. And since Hannibal was holding him close and his mouth was right there...

He leaned up hesitantly. Hannibal's lashes fluttered as he watched him curiously. Will let out a shaky breath before surging up to meet Hannibal's lips. It was uncoordinated and sloppy, but Will knew he had to.

There was a moment of hesitating surprise from Hannibal, before he relaxed into Will's mouth, smoothly taking the reins and guiding Will's clumsy lips into the kiss. Will melted at the gentle attention Hannibal poured on him. A wanton sound slipped past his lips as Hannibal held him and softly kissed him. Hannibal slowly pulled away, only to stare happily at Will's blown wide eyes. Will stared back, more than happy to read every line of adoration in Hannibal's face.

"May I kiss you again?" Hannibal asked and Will nodded eagerly.

Hannibal laughed and picked him up. Will squealed happily as he was hoisted up on the counter. Hannibal stood between his legs. He brushed a stray curl from Will's face.

Hannibal kissed him so sweetly, both his hands holding Will's face. Will tugged on Hannibal's apron, pulling the man closer. Will moaned when their chests touched. Will was never good at physical affection but he tried to remember what *he* liked. He tentatively raised his hands, and grasped the back of Hannibal's shirt. He tugged it up lightly, *he* had always wanted Will begging and gasping for him, he hoped this was what he was suppose to do.

Hannibal shifted and gently moved Will's hands away from pulling at his shirt. Will let out a shaky breath of relief, glad Hannibal wasn't making him take his shirt off. The older man nosed Will's ear making him groan at the sensation. Were things supposed to feel this wonderful?

Hannibal nibbled at his ear and whispered coyly, "I have sausage cooking just for you, my mongoose."

Will gasped lightly, Hannibal was being extremely flirtatious and loving; it was very endearing but it was close to an edge Will didn't want to cross. He pulled back from Hannibal, lightly shoving the man off him. The older man went without a struggle.

"Sorry," Will croaked, feeling bad for cutting it short.

"Nonsense," Hannibal brushed a strand of hair away, "You don't ever need to be sorry." Will bit his lip uncertain of what to do, thankfully Hannibal seemed to, "How are you feeling?"

"Eh, Ok," Will answered lamely, "Back's a little sore."

"Did you change the bandage?"

"Not yet," Will scooted off the counter, "I will after breakfast."

"I could help you. If you need assistance, it's hard not being able to see," Hannibal tried to convince him, but Will hastily shook his head.

He gave Hannibal an apologetic smile, "Thanks but no. I got it."

Hannibal's hand brushed over his now bruised cheek, looking concerned, "So independent..." He sighed, "If you change your mind, I'm always here to help."

"I appreciate it," Will said softly. And he meant it. If he could accept Hannibal's help he would. But he couldn't reveal his back. He was marked. If Hannibal saw, he'd know it. And Will didn't want Hannibal to see him differently.

"Have you decided what you are going to do?" Hannibal asked as he plated the meal. The eggs and sausage looked delicious, steaming heat up from the plate. Mouth watering, Will followed Hannibal to the table.

"This looks so good. Thanks for cooking."

Hannibal smiled, "You're very welcome. It's a protein scramble to help you regain your strength."

They sat, and Will cleared his throat, "I was thinking..." Will trailed off slowly, not sure if he should say what he was thinking aloud. But Hannibal hummed encouragingly for him to continue.

"I don't think I want to go back to the hardware store."

Will could tell Hannibal was trying to hide a happy grin. Of course he'd be delighted at this thought, it would force Will to spend more time with the man. Not that Will was complaining, but he really wished Hannibal wasn't so blatant in his smirking and preening. He scowled at Hannibal and snapped, "I'm still thinking about it."

Hannibal's expression smoothed into an unreadable '*oh how interesting Will*' expression that made Will want to smack him. Maybe the smirking was better than the fucking mask Hannibal had on.

Hannibal began eating, his carefully guarded expressions now displayed. The infuriating man asked, "What are those thoughts telling you?"

Will stabbed his fork into the sizzling sausage and took a large bite. *Fucking hell, it was good*. It was like no sausage he'd tried before (though his experiences were limited to frozen links with enough grease to kill a small victorian child). He unashamedly spoke with his mouth full, "I don't know, but I'm worried that guy will show up again."

"He will not touch you, Will. You're very brave, if he comes back you will stand up to him."

Will squirmed uncomfortably, "Yeah, well, like you said. I panicked. I don't want to be helpless. Not again. I think it would be better if I avoided that place."

Hannibal raised his eyebrow, "You know I do not care for your choice of employment, so do not take this as condoning of it, but do you really wish to give up so easily?"

"I'm not giving up!" Will argued, "It's moving forward. I'll get a different— better— job."

Hannibal looked skeptical, so Will dove forward, not sure he entirely wanted to reveal what he'd been thinking, "I was thinking that, maybe we could go to the police."

Hannibal raised his eyebrow.

"Not to report the crimes or anything," Will hastily explained, "But it might be good to see if they found my ID. Maybe it got tossed or turned in, I mean, what can a bunch of lowlifes do with a nineteen year old's ID? Can't even drink with it. And if the cops don't have it, maybe I can work on replacing it or something."

Hannibal was nodding along, "I think that's a good idea. It would be good to have your ID even if you don't want to press charges. Though, I would much prefer to see your attacker rotting behind bars."

Will snorted, "Yeah, like that'll happen."

Hannibal put his utensils down, "What do you mean?"

"I'm being sarcastic," Will said bitterly. *He* had never been caught, and if *he* ever did, *he* 'd be out in a blink of an eye. It was just the nature of these things.

"You don't seem sarcastic," Hannibal noted curiously.

"Bad guys rarely get caught," Will snapped irritably, "They just continue doing what they do, over and over. It never stops."

"Have you been hurt before, Will?"

Will jerked at words. He stared, stunned at Hannibal– hoping desperately he had misheard the man's words. "What?"

"This is not the first time you've been assaulted," Hannibal stated as if he had just realized the fact.

"I...I...", Will didn't know what to say. His stomach felt like it was crawling up his throat. *Hannibal couldn't– Hannibal wouldn't–*

Hannibal leaned forward to Will's horror, "You've been assaulted before. More than just your mugging or that disgusting drunk. Something else happened."

Will reeled back, shocked and terrified. His face must have shown it, because Hannibal was reaching for his hand, "Will, it's alright–"

Will stood up, his chair screeching on the wood floor. He hissed, "You don't know me."

"Will–"

"You don't know anything about me!" Will cried, his fists balled angrily. *How could Hannibal? How could he?*

"Will, I'm–"

"Shut up! Just shut up!" He turned and ran upstairs. Slamming his bedroom door closed, he threw himself on the bed, tears streaming down his face. He hugged the blankets near. He couldn't believe Hannibal had guessed. He thought he hid it ok.

Apparently, his abuse was written plainly on him. He was marked and stained and dirty. Hannibal could see it. It felt like there was a big sign on his forehead that said: broken. It was the first thing people saw and it was all they cared about.

Will thought Hannibal was different. He thought Hannibal saw him for the person he was. The person under all the dirt and fear. Now Hannibal knew, he would only see Will as a broken object. A useless, used piece of shit.

Will's mind spiraled and he kept crying, burrowing into the bed.

*

A few hours later, Will had finally hiccupped and sobbed his way into exhaustion. But he wasn't ready to sleep, he hauled himself out of bed. His clothes were sweaty and crumpled. He felt disgusting and vile lying in the bed. He needed to do something. He showered, letting the water beat at his skin. Then he changed the bandages, not even looking at them. He had care for the other wound on his back much the same. Don't look, just ignore. Try to forget.

Once it was finished, he wanted to cry all over again, but couldn't get his eyes to cooperate. He sat desperately lonely and sad. Finally, he moved. He crept down the stairs. He didn't know if he wanted to run into Hannibal or not. Was he coming downstairs just because he was exhausted from being alone and crying? Or did he really want to talk to the man? He didn't want to talk to him about what happened. Hannibal had seen it, and now he knew Will was fucked up. But maybe they could talk about something else. Maybe Will wouldn't feel so terrible.

He heard Hannibal before he saw him. The sound of soft piano music came from the living room. Will followed it, standing in the doorway wearily. Hannibal was sitting on a bench by a piano. His posture was straight, yet he was at ease. His hands flew over the keys with skill and precision, and the music, damn the music, was lovely to hear.

Will crept into the room, skirting the edges, and staying covert. Hannibal suddenly stopped, grabbing a pencil and scribbling notes on the paper strewn across the top of the instrument. Will froze, but Hannibal had dropped the pencil down and immediately begun the melody again.

Will like the song. It was melodious and somber, but had a flourish that reminded him of Hannibal. Everything the man did was purposefully grand and artistic.

Hannibal stopped again, jotting notes. Will cleared his throat.

Hannibal's eyes jumped to his, surprised to see him, "Will."

Will smiled, his eyes still watery, but happy to have surprised the older student.

"I didn't hear you come in," Hannibal's voice sounded strained and apologetic.

Will slowly inched from the edge of the room, "Sorry. Didn't want to disturb you."

Hannibal shook his head and moved to stand, "You didn't."

"Wait!" Will stepped forward. He didn't want Hannibal to stop. Hannibal looked confused, but sat back on the bench, staring expectantly at him. Will bit his lip, looking awkwardly away. "What were you playing?"

"I'm composing a piece. It's not finished yet," Hannibal explained through his guarded expression.

"I liked it," Will responded. It was true. He really did like the tune.

Hannibal gave him a small smile, "Thank you, Will."

"Uh, can you play it some more?" Will asked nervously.

"It's barely a melody, but I can play it through," Hannibal agreed, moving his hands in place.

"Or—" Will interrupted. Hannibal stopped his motions, as Will stepped closer, "Or—uh, I mean, you could just keep composing it. If you don't mind me listening. It's just nice to hear

it. Hear it evolving." Will stuttered bashfully. He really liked the music. He felt calmer listening to it.

"Of course, Will," Hannibal said softly.

Will shuffled backwards until his legs hit the couch and sat. Hannibal had turned away, writing briefly in his notes before continuing. Will pulled his feet up on the couch, curling comfortably in the corner of the couch.

He watched and listened as Hannibal composed slowly. It was relaxing, listening to the music fade in and out. Watching Hannibal's shoulders rise and fall with the rhythm of the music. There were no expectations and Hannibal wasn't even looking at him. He was safe. Will felt his eyes droop. He was exhausted. He let his body relax into the sofa, his head resting upon the couch arm. Soon, he was fast asleep.

*

Hannibal was hyper aware of Will sitting behind him as he composed. He wasn't used to an audience. He worked in private for most things, finding it distracting to have others watching over his shoulder. He liked showcasing his final work— a musical composition, a dinner spread, or a displayed body. His process, the creation, was meant to be personal, intimate, not to be shared.

And yet for Will, he allowed it.

He could feel his mongoose's eyes on him. How he wanted to read the thoughts behind those eyes. Will was determined to lock himself away from Hannibal. All day, Hannibal had listened with gnawing anxiety, little sobs and cries coming from behind Will's door. It seemed to echo around the house, driving Hannibal to the piano to drown out the sounds he could not fix.

He felt no pride in calling out Will's secret. In fact, he wished he had kept the observation to himself. He could have helped the mongoose from a distance, secretly encouraging him and building his confidence. Maybe Will would have told him later. Perhaps when they were cuddled together in Hannibal's bed. Will would whisper his stories into Hannibal's ear, while he held him close.

Hannibal hit an off key. That was not to be. Will did not trust him yet. He scratched out the note on his pages. Beginning the tune again. He would have to try again with Will. He could not be blunt. He needed to understand, he needed to show Will he cared.

So, Hannibal continued working on the piece. Ignoring Will, though listening intently for any sounds. After about an hour, he had reached his limits and closed the piano, tired from the work. The piece was still far from finished, but Hannibal had nothing left to give it today. He turned about to say something to Will, but stopped.

Will was curled asleep on the couch. Hannibal had no idea how long Will had been out, but based on the amount of drool pooled on the couch's arm, he'd guess for the majority of the

time. He smiled fondly at his mongoose. Will had been distraught yesterday evening and today, his body needed the rest. Hannibal took a blanket and covered Will's form.

Will stirred, waking at the touch. He rolled over, blinking awake, and groggily staring at Hannibal.

"Go back to sleep," Hannibal said softly.

But Will, ever stubborn, sat up, rubbing his eyes, "How long was I asleep?"

Hannibal checked his watch, it was early evening, "About an hour."

Will frowned, pushing the blankets off, "Jeez, I didn't mean to fall asleep. Sorry."

"Your body is tired, let it rest," Hannibal countered gently.

Will snorted, "I'm a college student. Rest is a myth."

He stood quickly, too quickly and stumbled—falling into Hannibal's arms. Hannibal caught him and chuckled as Will hauled himself away, red as a beet, "You're clumsy, and need rest."

Will scowled, "I'm not clumsy—the blanket caught me."

"Ah," Hannibal answered amused.

"Trying to sabotage me," Will muttered grumpily.

"May I kiss you?" Hannibal asked, surprised by his own growing need to touch Will.

Will looked surprised, but perked up from his unhappy mood. He shrugged, "If you want."

Hannibal lightly grabbed his hand, pulling Will close. Their chests bumped and Will gasped quietly at the touch. Hannibal watched Will's lips. How his mouth opened in a small 'o' whenever he was particularly stunned. Hannibal could fill hundreds of pages with drawings of Will's lips. The study would be unceasing. His hand glided up Will's arm, trailing his neck, until he tipped Will's face up. He leaned down, lightly tasting Will's lips as the younger man groaned in need.

Hannibal wrapped his arm around Will's back, pulling their bodies flush as he deepened the kiss. Will's pliant mouth opened more, allowing Hannibal's tongue to dip inside. Will clutched at his shirt, moaning into the kiss.

Hannibal pulled away looking into the sleepy eyes of Will. How he wanted to share everything with this squirrely scruffy mongoose. He wanted to write songs for him, display gory bodies for him, and most urgently kiss him senseless. He dove back into that delightful mouth, but was gently forced to part by Will. Will chuckled softly as his lips were plucked from Hannibal's, "Ease up, I just woke up."

Hannibal immediately chastised himself, pulling away and releasing Will from his grip, "I apologize, Will."

Will smiled softly, his hands still resting on Hannibal's chest, "It's ok, you just looked like you wanted more than I can give."

Hannibal blinked dumbly. Of course his mongoose had seen. He hadn't tried to hide his desire. He wanted Will every way: carnally, spiritually, mentally. Anyway he could have him. It was an unquenchable appetite, that Hannibal must try harder to hide from his keen mongoose. He clasped Will's hand bringing the slender fingers up, where he devoted a tender kiss on his knuckles.

"I only want what you want, Will," Hannibal assured him, before releasing the hand back upon his chest. Will sighed, a pretty blush on his cheeks and his hands shyly left. Will turned teetering towards the exit, looking like he didn't know where to go. Finally, by the doorway, he turned nervously to Hannibal, who stood in the same spot watching his mongoose.

"Do you think it's too late?" Will bit the inside of his cheek.

"For what?"

"Eh, to go to the police?"

Hannibal drew in a breath of surprise. He hasn't expected Will to change his mind. He tried to play it cool and checked the time. It wasn't too late. "I'm sure there's time."

"Will you go with me?" Will asked. Before Hannibal could affirm, Will rushed on anxiously, "You don't have to— I mean, if you don't want to. And I'm sure you have homework, so—"

"I'd be happy to take you," Hannibal interrupted before the insecure young man could spin himself into despair.

Will's shoulders relaxed in relief. His hands fidgeted, "Thanks."

"It's no problem, come let's get ready."

*

Will was relieved all around. Apparently, Hannibal wasn't going to push the subject of his past, nor was he treating him any differently. Will was worried Hannibal would treat him like a fragile piece of glass, but other than the man wearing a fairly complex emotional/ facial mask, Hannibal hadn't stopped being himself.

The kissing hadn't stopped either, so that was nice.

They left quickly and Hannibal drove to the nearest station. In the car, Will clarified just what he wanted revealed. The story would be as such: he had been walking, he had been mugged, and his wallet had been stolen. That would be the whole story. Nothing about the drunk man. Nothing about living in his car. Nothing about scars or old hurts. Nothing except to inquire about his ID.

Hannibal stood next to him in line at the station. Will felt grounded by the other man. If he had come by himself, he probably would have chickened out at least 5 times. Hannibal was

steady and assuring and gave him just enough confidence to not bolt away from the police. It was finally their turn and the police officer called him up. He looked tired and overworked, with a developing dad bod from all the desk work.

“M—my wallet was stolen and my ID was in there, I wanted to report it,” Will’s voice shook with anxiety. He wasn’t usually a nervous person, but something about being surrounded by cops made him quake. Probably because *he* had all the local cops in *his* pocket. Will hadn’t dared report *him* to the police. It would have just gotten him into more trouble.

“Name,” The cop grunted.

“Will Graham.”

“Do you have any other forms of identification?” The cop snapped.

Will shook his head, feeling helpless, “I know my license number and all the information on the card. I know my social security number, but I don’t have it.”

“Birth certificate?”

“No, sir, it’s in Louisiana,” Will paled. *He* had taken all of his papers. Leaving him with only his driver’s license to travel with.

The cop scratched his head, “Well, you’re gonna have to jump through some hoops to get it back, but let’s see if we have it. Give me the license number.”

Will told him while the man typed it in. The officer looked surprised at his screen. He frowned at Will, “What’s your name again?”

“Will Graham.”

“Ok,” The cop stood looking somewhat frazzled. He looked between Hannibal and Will, “Uh, I need to talk to my supervisor. Can you take a seat? I’ll be right back.”

The cop disappeared in the back. Will wanted to question why, but his tongue felt too heavy to move. Hannibal took his hand, squeezing it comfortingly. The older student led him to the uncomfortable plastic chairs. They sat. Will’s head was spinning with information. How was he going to get his ID, if he didn’t have any other paperwork? He couldn’t just go back and just ask *him* for it. *He’d* never let Will leave Louisiana again.

Will leaned his head against Hannibal’s shoulder. At least Hannibal was here, surely the older student would know what to do. Hannibal’s thumb was stroking his hand, “It’s OK, Will. Based on the reaction, it seems like they have your ID. He probably just wants to ensure how to give it back without your other forms of ID.”

That was comforting at least. “You think I can get it back?”

“I think so,” Hannibal assured.

The cop appeared and Will sat up. The officer gestured for them, "Eh, my captain wants to talk to you. Mind coming back?"

Will looked nervously at Hannibal, but the older student just gave him a tight smile and pulled him to his feet, "Of course."

They were led back into the station and shown to a little room. It reminded Will of an interrogation room, sans the bolted table and handcuffs. They sat once more on equally uncomfortable chairs.

"I'm not going to be arrested, right?" Will worried.

Hannibal chuckled, "Of all the possibilities, I think that is the most doubtful."

Will scowled. Hopefully he wasn't being arrested, Hannibal didn't have to be an ass and worry him. He stuck his tongue out at the man feeling like being immature, "You're right, they're probably arresting you for being a d—"

His perfect retort was interrupted by the entrance of an officer. Will gasped in audible surprise. It was the cop who had knocked on his door when he first arrived in D.C. *What was he doing here?*

The cop looked surprised as well, recognizing Will as the scruffy kid sleeping in his car. He pointed at Will, "Will Graham?"

Will nodded, "That's me."

The officer sat down facing them, "Not still sleeping in your car?"

Will glanced at Hannibal sheepishly, "No. I made it to my dorm."

Hannibal looked confused and was eyeing the officer critically.

"Well Will, my name's Jack Crawford. I'm the captain of this district. I've got some questions for you."

"Do you have my ID?" Will asked before he could stop himself.

"A wallet and keys were turned in," Jack answered slowly, "But some circumstances have arisen."

"What circumstances?" Hannibal asked sharply.

Jack turned to look at Hannibal. His expression searching, "Who are you?"

"My name's Hannibal Lecter. I'm housing with Will," Hannibal answered smoothly, not breaking eye contact with the officer.

"You want him here?" Jack asked Will, making Hannibal bristle

"Yeah," Will answered quickly, slipping his hand into Hannibal's palm. Hannibal squeezed it.

Jack eyed them critically but moved on, "There's been activity around this ID. You see, Will, your name has been put on a missing persons list in over 10 states."

Will's heart froze. *It couldn't be.*

"What does that mean?" Hannibal asked, sitting forward.

"Will's been missing. Or, on paper, he's missing. So when the ID was found and turned in, it was flagged on our system and theirs."

"Theirs?"

"The other states. They would be notified to continue their investigation."

Will felt like the room was shrinking. Captain Crawford's voice droned on, "It's been about a week since the ID was discovered. The other departments have moved forward."

"What does moving forward, entail?" Hannibal asked.

"They contacted the person who had filed the missing report."

"No—" Will managed to speak. He clutched his stomach, feeling like he was going to be sick. They couldn't have. They couldn't have told *him* .

Hannibal's hand touched his shoulder, and Will knew Hannibal was looking at him anxiously. But he couldn't respond. He couldn't think. They had told *him* . *He* knew. *He* knew where Will was hiding.

"No—"

"Who was the original person?" Hannibal worried, asking more to Will than Crawford. Crawford flipped through his files.

"Who was it," Hannibal urged.

Will wanted them to stop. It was happening all so fast. They couldn't say *his* name or else it would be too real. He just wanted everything to stop. He wanted to go back to Hannibal's couch and listen to the man compose. He didn't want to be here.

But Crawford had found the page.

Will found himself swaying as the name was read. The suffocating room, the pounding of his chest. His vision darkened and he felt himself lose consciousness as Crawford read:

"Mason Verger."

It desires the wind

Chapter Notes

WARNING: Grooming, non-con, rape

4 Years Ago:

A bottle shattered against the door. Will flinched at the noise, trying not to react at how close the bottle came to hitting him. His dad was in a drunken frenzy. The old man swayed precariously, reaching for another bottle.

"Dad please—," Will tried to reason, but angry deadened eyes met his, and another bottle was chucked at him. This time it clipped his shoulder before spinning and shattering on the floor.

Will cried out in pain, clutching his shoulder. His father was in a foul mood for seemingly no reason other than being drunk off his ass. Will had walked in late, only to meet his father screaming and yelling.

"What the hell, dad!" Will yelled, but the old man was crazed and reaching for another bottle. Will bolted out the door, slamming it shut as another glass shattered on the other side. The apartment reeked of alcohol even from the outside. Will scurried down the hall to the stairs. Unfortunately, there was a group of guys smoking in Will's one refuge. He slipped past them while they glared at him hatefully. One spit at him. Probably mad Will would attempt to invade their territory. *It was a fucking public staircase* .

Will half thought about going back and sitting outside the apartment door, but he didn't want to walk past that group again. It would probably start a fight. He might be scrappy, but he couldn't fight a whole group of them.

Which left him with nowhere to go, except to walk. He had been walking before he came home, it looked like he'd have to continue. He started down the street, hugging the building shadow for cover. Thunder rolled, and he cursed as the first drops of rain fell. Just his luck.

Will trudged through the rain. Letting the water soak him through. There was no point in trying to stay dry. All he could do was keep walking and not look like an easy target. He shivered as lightning flashed. The storm was getting bad. Will reached into his pocket, drawing out a crumpled business card. It was for a shelter. The guidance counselor at his school had told him about this place.

"If it gets bad," the counselor had said, "Go there. They'll help."

Will had taken the card, location printed in bold font. He had slipped it in his back pocket swearing he would throw it away as soon as he left the office. For some reason, whether he

forgot or decided to hold on to it, it remained in his pocket.

He now stared down at it, through dripping locks of hair. The Southern Baptist Ministries for Boys. It wasn't far. Will walked quickly to it. It was an old church building that must have been a school at some point. It had long low brick sides with bars over the windows. Will didn't consider the bars, it was a bad part of town, of course there'd be bars on the windows.

Like something out of a horror movie, lightning flashed and the dark building was lit hauntingly against the storm clouds. Will shuddered, he considered turning back and taking his chances under a porch somewhere, but his body was so cold and drenched with rain. He shuffled to the entrance and pushed the door open.

He was met by a barren hospital-looking waiting room. The fluorescent lights flickered and buzzed and the floor smelled strongly of bleach and cleaners. Will could already feel himself getting a headache.

"Hey sweetie," A voice called.

Will wiped back his wet hair looking at an old lady. She was big and round and smelled like moth balls (not a particularly nice smell). But she smiled and gestured him in, "Need a place for the night?"

Will nodded.

The lady waved him in, bustling down a hallway. Will was surprised, usually there was a lot of paperwork involved in places like this. But nonetheless, the building was dry and warm, so he followed her.

"What's your name, sweetheart?"

"Will. Will Graham."

"Ain't that a nice name for a boy like you," The lady was so cheery and patronizing, Will could feel his annoyance growing, he wasn't a baby. He grunted in response.

"How old are you, sweetie? Twelve?"

"I'm fifteen," Will mumbled, annoyed at her. In fact, he was almost sixteen, but nobody would have guessed it. His round baby face refused to harden into something manly.

She turned to him, looking critically, "Sweetie, this shelter is for younger boys, but I suppose you'll be fine."

Will swallowed, half nervous half angry. He didn't want to break any rules, but he also didn't want to go back out into the rain. He kept quiet and followed the lady. She opened a door, keeping the light off. It was a long room, filled with bunk beds. It smelled like urine and sweat. Sleeping boys filled the room, their breathy snores radiating around. Will shuffled in.

The lady pointed him to an empty bunk, "Sleep here, sweetie. We'll talk in the morning."

She turned and left, leaving Will standing on the cold floor. He went to the bunk. The blankets were old and smelled funky, but at least not like urine or shit, so Will slid in. He shivered under the blankets, his clothes dampening the fabric. It felt disgusting, but at least no one was throwing things at him. He closed his eyes and tried to rest.

*

Screaming woke his dreams. It wasn't screaming though, it was just boys shrieking and laughing. A crowd of 30 of them were rushing through the door. Will shakily stood and followed, not sure where exactly he was going.

The boys, all around middle school looking ages or younger, careened and hollered, leading him to a cafeteria. Will quickly got in line for food, helping himself to the colorless eggs and oatmeal. He found an empty spot at a table and scooped the dull food into his mouth. It was gross and made his stomach almost turn.

The lady appeared again. spotting him she walked over and crooned, "Did you sleep well sweetie?"

"Yeah, fine," Will mumbled, giving up on the food with a sigh.

"Why don't you come to my office and we can get you all sorted?"

Her office was cramped, lined with filing cabinets and overflowing with papers. She bustled around to the back of her desk, while Will took a seat on a rusty folding chair. The office door opened.

"Who's this Marci?"

Will turned to face the new voice. A handsome man stood in the doorway, a mischievous smile playing on his lips. Wild blonde hair with wild delighted eyes. Marci– the woman Will assumed– immediately became flustered, standing to greet the newcomer, "Mr. Verger, I didn't expect you. What are you doing here?"

"Ah, thought I'd drop in and see my boys, how's Henry?"

Marci frowned, "He's still in the infirmary."

Mr. Verger pouted sadly, "Terrible accident, wasn't it? Falling down those stairs. Breaking his arm. Just terrible. You'll have to let me know when he's better."

The lady look angry now, "Mr. Verger–"

The man raised his hand silencing her, Will couldn't help but appreciate the man, the lady was annoying to listen to, always babying. The man continued, "Henry's accident is not going to happen again. I'll look after him myself when he gets back."

The woman pursed her lips but said nothing. Mr. Verger smiled, now turning towards Will, "Now, who's this?"

Before the annoying lady could answer, Will stuck out his hand, "I'm Will."

The man smiled, taking his hand, "Nice to meet a new face, Will. I'm Mason Verger. You can call me Mason."

Will smiled back, liking the way his stomach fluttered when Mason looked at him. Will knew he liked guys. He especially liked older guys that made him feel special. It probably stemmed from some buried daddy issues, but Will wasn't going to examine that too hard. He just relished under Mason's gaze, "Nice to meet you, Mason."

Mason took a seat next to Will, throwing his arm around the back of the seat. "Well, Will what did Marci drag you in for today? Roughhousing? Or did you not eat your breakfast—Marci's such a fucking stickler for breakfast."

Marci sat, looking nervous and unhappy, "He came in last night. He doesn't have any paperwork, and he's fifteen."

Mason leaned into his space, taking his chin, "Damn, you don't look fifteen."

Will swallowed nervously. The way the man's eyes gleamed were dangerous.

"He looks twelve," the lady agreed tersely.

Mason shot her a frown, "No." He smiled back at Will, "If anything he looks older. You could be eighteen or twenty even."

Will couldn't help but preen under those words. He liked being called older. He gave Mason a wiry smile, "I'm almost sixteen."

The lady was watching them intently. Her eyes narrowed, "Mr. Verger, I think it'd be best if Will and I continued this alone."

Mason sighed unhappily, "Now why's that, Marci? Huh? Why can't your benevolent donor be involved? Do you not need money for the boys?"

The lady scowled, "I didn't mean that Mr. Verger. It's just Will can't stay. He needs to—"

"It's fine. Let him stay. He can be an exception."

"But Mr. Verger—"

"What were you saying about the roof leaking?" The woman quieted, looking rather frightened and cowed. Will swore Mr. Verger was threatening her, but Mason just smiled and patted Will on the back, "You come back anytime you need to, Will. Just ask for Mason."

Will mumbled his thanks as the man rose and left the room. Marci still looked rather frightened. Will shifted uneasily, "Uh, can I go?"

The lady nodded. Will hurriedly went for the door when Marci spoke, "This shelter is for younger boys. Mason says you can stay, so you can, but I don't want any trouble," She looked

at the door where Mason had disappeared through, "Older boys cause trouble."

"I'm going home," Will answered, "I just needed a bed for the night."

The lady stood, "Good. It's better if you don't come back."

*

His father didn't ask where he went and Will didn't tell him. It happened like this often. His father would blow up, hitting Will or making him run and then the next day he'd be fine. Acting like nothing happened. Will didn't bother talking about it. He kept to himself.

It was about a week later, his dad had a fit again. Screaming and blaming Will for his mother leaving. Will hesitantly went to the shelter with a black eye and bruises from where his dad had hit him. He was shown to a bunk, different from before. This one smelled of urine, but Will still climbed in. Better to sleep in shit than get his face beat in.

He met Mr. Verger again, or Mr. Verger found him. He had slung an arm around his shoulder and told him the bruises made him look like a man. He gave him chocolate and told him he wanted him to come more often. By the time Mason left, Will was a blushing stuttering mess.

The next time his dad beat him, he didn't hesitate. He ran to the shelter greeted by the unhappy Miss Marci who called him sweetie to his displeasure. He slept, got breakfast, talked to Mason, then went to school.

It went on for weeks. Sometimes he wished he could go to the shelter every night, just so he could wake up and see Mason. Mason laughed with him, teased him, gave him snacks, hugged him, even held his hand. He learned that Mason donated lots of his money to run the shelter, and didn't ask for anything in return. Will idolized him for it. The man radiated with confidence that Will wished he had. Mason took what he wanted. Nothing stood in his way.

So when Mason suggested they hang out outside the shelter, Will eagerly agreed. They went to the movies. They sat in the back row, alone in the theater. While bombs went off on screen, Will's heart was about to explode. They made out. Will could barely breathe with how much Mason kissed him. He felt Mason everywhere. It was like the man was consuming him. And Will let him.

Mason called him a "Good boy" while they kissed and rubbed against each other. Will's teenage brain was on fire with his senses. His mind melted with every touch. Despite Mason's advances, they didn't get past making out that night. Will was much too nervous in the big open theater. Mason had pouted and whined, so Will promised they'd do more later.

And what Mason wanted, Mason got.

Will blew him a week later. Kneeling in front of the man in the cramped Janitor's closet at the shelter. Inexperienced and nervous, Will tried his best. Mason was rough, but Will didn't know any better. He just assumed that getting his hair pulled taunt and choking and gagging

were a part of the experience. When Mason came down his throat without warning, he tried to hide his tears. Mason meant well. It was obviously Will's fault for not doing better.

Mason pulled him from where he knelt and lapped up his tears hungrily with false kisses. Mason told him that he'd learn. That Mason would teach him. All he needed was more practice. He hugged Will tight. Will hugged him back, promising he'd do better.

Mason held him to his promise. Whenever they met, Will was down on the ground trying to figure out how to pleasure the man. Mason didn't teach, Mason just took. If Will wasn't ready or if he choked, it wasn't Mason's fault. It was Will's. He believed it was his fault he was struggling. Mason told him to do better, so Will tried.

*

A couple months into their relationship, Mason got them a hotel room. Will had just escaped his dad screaming at him, and he gladly accepted the offer. A hotel room was far better than sleeping in the shelter's dormitory. Plus he'd get to hang out with Mason who would probably buy him food and hug him.

When they arrived, Mason opened the door to the hotel room. Leading Will into the dimly lit room. Will gasped when he saw the candles and rose petals scattered about. He looked at Mason in wonder, "What is this?"

Mason grinned, wrapping his arms around the boy, "It's for you. I think we should make this official."

He kissed Will, and Will kissed him back. He was unsure what Mason meant, but he wanted to stay with Mason. He wanted to make the older man happy.

Mason led him to the bed and began to undress him. Will was unsure about what was happening. Usually they both stayed clothed, sans Mason pulling his dick out for Will to choke on, but now it felt different. Will tentatively touch Mason's arm as the older man unbuttoned his jeans, "What are we doing?"

Mason laughed, "We're making it official."

Mason pulled Will's jeans down, and Will stepped out of them shivering. He only had his boxers on and was nervous about being so exposed to Mason. Mason, still clothed, stared at him hungrily.

"Are—are we having sex?" Will asked.

The slap startled him. He hadn't expected it and it came from nowhere. He clutched his cheek staring in wide eyed horror at Mason.

Mason sighed, "I shouldn't have done that. Will, I'm sorry."

Will blinked at him. His father had never apologized after hitting him. Getting hit was normal for Will, but being apologized to. Well, it made Will completely forget who had hurt him. He grabbed Mason's hand, "It's ok. Did I do something wrong? I'm sorry if I did."

Mason's eyes flashed with something cold and dangerous. He smiled, pulling Will against his chest, "No, I just wanted to have something special with you. Something that would just be for us. But if you don't want that. If you don't want me—"

"No! I do. I do want you!" Will didn't want to lose Mason.

"Good. But have you ever been in a relationship before?"

Will shook his head, no.

"Then I gotta teach you," he said sincerely, "People that are together, do stuff for each other. You know? I wanted to do this for you tonight. You gonna listen to me?"

Will still wasn't sure what Mason wanted but he nodded along, anything to keep the man with him. Mason made him get on the bed. His boxers were discarded and he was left naked under Mason's gaze. He shivered. He was afraid but also excited. Mason climbed after him, kissing him senseless. Mason's hand wrapped around his member and Will was immediately lost in the sensation. Mason had never touched him before and Will was drowning in how *good* it felt and more so how good it felt for Mason to care about him. Mason jerked him off quickly making Will scream out his name. Will was left messy and sweaty in bed with cum splattered on his stomach. He wanted to lay there in post-coital bliss, but Mason was pulling him up.

"I made it good for you, yeah?" Mason asked.

Will nodded, still hazy from the experience, "God, yes Mason. It was incredible."

Mason grinned, "Good. Now you're gonna make it good for me."

Mason fucked him that night. It was uncomfortable and painful, but Will held his tongue. This was what people did for each other when they were together. That's what Mason had told him. If anything Will should be grateful to Mason for seeing something in him. Mason left right after. Telling Will to rest for the night. Will found himself crying alone and in pain. In the morning, Will tried to stand. He needed to go to school. But he could barely walk. He collapsed in the dirty bed, he didn't know if it was normal to feel this way after having sex. Should he feel abandoned and dirty?

Mason came back in the late morning. Will had no idea how long they had the room for, but Mason didn't seem to mind him. He laughed as he entered the room, "You're still sleeping?"

Will hoped his face didn't show his tears. He tried not to snifle as he whispered, "It hurts, Mason."

Mason stared at him so intensely Will had to look away. Mason wasn't angry, Will realized. Mason was happy and that scared Will. Mason grinned at him, his eyes sadistically lit. Will trembled seeing it.

But Mason's expression changed into pity to Will's relief, "It's going to hurt the first couple times. It just takes practice."

Will frowned, feeling confused. He had felt terrible all night. How could it be better?

Mason sighed, rubbing his temple, "I should have known."

"W-what?" Will stuttered

"You aren't ready for this. You're too young. What was I thinking? I'm done. We're over." To Will's fright the man turned to leave. Will couldn't handle being abandoned again. He wanted Mason to stay.

"Wait!" Will shouted, scrambling in pain from under the covers.

Mason stopped, "What?"

"Don't go, please, Mason." Will begged.

"Why should I?" Mason said coldly, "You're not ready."

"I am ready! I can do whatever, I can!"

Mason laughed, "That's a lot coming from someone who was just complaining about sex. I had a good time, and I didn't hear you bitching about it last night."

Will flinched at the man's words. But Mason was right, he hadn't said anything the night before. It was obviously his fault. He hung his head, his shoulders drooping, "I'm sorry, Mason." He said, hoping to appease the man.

"Look, if you want this to work out, you gotta stop whining and bitching. I don't want to hear another complaint from you. You got it?"

Will nodded, still frightened and anxious Mason would leave him.

"I've got a thousand other things to do then hold some kid's hand, got it? I don't have time to listen to every little complaint. You need to be an adult and suck it up. And if you can't handle it, then I'm out. And you can kiss your spot at the shelter goodbye."

Will gasped, "W-what?"

"You heard me. I'm the one letting you stay when you're obviously too old for it. Do you understand? If I say you're out. You're out."

"Mason, I don't want to leave! I want to be with you!" Will stumbled out of the bed, falling to his knees in front of the man. Tears filled his eyes and he grasped at Mason's pant legs.

"Then what are you going to do?" Mason asked coldly.

"I won't complain, I promise," Will cried.

"Yeah, no bitching about it," Mason agreed, "What else?"

"I'll practice. I want to get better with you. I want it to be better, please Mason!" Will sobbed.

Mason grabbed his chin, forcing him to look up. His face was hard as his thumb brushed away Will's tears. He brought the tear covered thumb to his mouth, then sucked the boy's salty tears in vicious delight. Mason grinned like the devil, "Good. Then we can start now."

Will was thrown back on the bed, where Mason fucked him again. Will cried, trying to muffle his sobs in the pillows. It was worse than the first time, but Will didn't complain. And when Mason was finished with him, he screwed up his face and dressed as Mason did. His body stung, but he refused to be left behind. He dragged his clothes on and limped after the man, determined to stay in his good graces. Mason slung an arm around his shoulders as they left the disgusting room.

Mason pressed a kiss against Will's hair, "Good boy."

Caught on its own string

Mason was sundered by five cords. One tied around the neck, two more by the feet, and the last two round the wrists. Each of the cords was then attached to five different mules who were moved in opposite directions. Resulting the splitting of limbs and tendons in the most horrific and painful way. It was a terrible death.

Hannibal had considered the medieval torture and fatal penalty many times. Wondering how he might recreate it. He had taken limbs easily, a bone saw in his hand felt like a pencil or paintbrush. A tool he used for his creations. But to rive a human. A live human into pieces, slowly and torturously. He must think more on it.

Whatever the worst death. The most blood curdling, scream filled. That was what he must think upon for this Mason Verger.

Hannibal caught Will before the fragile student could hit his head (again) upon the ground. The officer, Jack Crawford, had jumped to his feet alarmed. Hannibal shouted for him to fetch some water. The man left quickly.

Hannibal lowered Will to the floor, cradling him to his chest. Will was trembling and his eyes beneath his lids were fluttering. Hannibal called to him hoping the man would wake from whatever horror had kidnapped his mind.

"Will! Will wake up," He ordered urgently.

Will moaned and his eyes fluttered opened though he seemed not to see for a moment. His eyes finally focused, and the fear in his face lessened, "Hannibal?"

"Oh, Will," Hannibal sighed in relief, embracing Will tightly.

His mongoose squirmed in his arms until Hannibal released him. Will pushed himself away from him and staggered to the plastic chair where he collapsed. Hannibal was right next to him, his hands offering support, though Will didn't take any. The younger man was frowning and his arms were crossed like he was trying to hold himself together. His figure diminished and shrunk in the chair.

Jack returned a moment later, water bottle in hand. He opened it and handed it to Will, "Here, drink some water."

Will's hands trembled but he took the bottle and drank. He refused to meet their gazes. Hannibal slipped his hand onto Will's shoulder, needing to touch Will for his own peace of mind, "Are you alright, Will?"

Will gulped down some more water. His eyes darted up to Jack's and he mumbled, "Thanks." Not answering Hannibal's question. He handed the water bottle back. Jack screwed on the cap before placing it on the ground near Will. He cleared his throat about to speak when Will

interrupted him, "I didn't eat today. I'm sorry, my blood sugar must be low. I didn't mean to faint."

No one means to faint. The idea that Will's action was somehow his fault was preposterous. Hannibal squeezed his shoulder comfortingly, "It's alright Will. Are you still feeling dizzy or lightheaded?" Will shook his head, brushing Hannibal's hand away from his shoulder, and sinking deeper into the chair. Hannibal's heart tinged at the rejection, but one look at Will told him the younger student was hurting and scared. He stayed his frustration.

"Well," Jack said, clearing his throat once more, "Let's get on with it, why don't we?"

"I know Mason," Will said suddenly, "He's an ex. I would prefer it if you didn't give him my location."

Jack nodded. They had both surmised Will knew Mason, in some sort of negative light. Hannibal surmised darkly that this Mason was the one that had abused his mongoose. It seemed like the only possibility with how Will reacted. Dark, murderous thoughts swirled in his mind again. If he ever laid eyes on this Mason Verger, he would rip his face off.

"I'm sorry for this Will, but Mr. Verger has already been contacted about your wallet being found last week," Crawford said apologetically.

Will covered his mouth as if to keep from crying, his whole body shook with effort. Hannibal's hand was back on Will's shoulder another on his knee, ready to catch in case Will fainted again. Even Jack leaned forward, the large man looking worried.

After a moment Will seemed to gain control of himself again. He pulled hand to his lap. It was fisted and shaking slightly. He sat straighter, and face expressionless, "Is he here?"

"Not that we know of. He hasn't come to our precinct to pick up your wallet or anything. He's most likely still in Louisiana."

Will snorted a laugh, a desperate and sad sound, "He's here. I know he is."

"Has anyone else asked about Will?" Hannibal wondered, trying to help his mongoose.

Crawford check his files again, "A Mr. Doemling came in two days ago."

"Cordell." Will said flatly, "He's Mason's... friend."

Hannibal rubbed Will's knee, trying to calm him, but Will turned directly at him, his face hard and angry. He spat, "Don't touch me, Lecter."

Hannibal retracted his hands, shocked. Will spoke with such venom and he glared at him as if he were the monster terrorizing his mind. Hannibal moved away, feeling like a kicked dog, tail between his legs. He apologized, abashed and sincere, "I'm sorry, Will."

Will didn't respond, didn't even indicate he had heard Hannibal. He sat straight backed, like at attention, "How do I get my wallet and keys back, officer?"

"You're free to take them," The officer answered easily.

Will nodded curtly, "I'd like them. Do I need to do anything to close the missing person's report?"

"No, we will. We'll also indicate a level of... discretion to be appointed when giving out the information."

"Thank you," Will's fortitude was strong, but Hannibal could see the beginnings of cracks. Will could not stay hidden behind his barriers for much longer. Will swallowed and his voice cracked, "Is there a way to keep *him* from knowing I've been found?"

Jack shook his head looking grim, "No, he'll be notified that the investigation is closed here in D.C., meaning you've been found here."

Hannibal jumped in, trying to help, "Would a restraining order keep him from finding out."

Crawford hummed thinking, "Yes, most likely, though if Mason just has his friends ask, the information would be given."

"Hannibal," Will said suddenly, "I'd like to go now. Mr. Crawford, could you get my things?"

Crawford nodded, "Of course," before quickly leaving the tense interview room.

"Will, would you like to talk—"

"No. I just want to go home."

Hannibal's heart twisted. Hurt at the denial, yet glad Will saw his house as home. Crawford returned, and with a few forms signed, Will was given his wallet and keys. They left at Will's behest.

*

"Can you pull over?" Will asked quietly.

They were in the car on their way home. It had been a silent car ride. Hannibal pulled over immediately. An empty street. Will tumbled out of the car. He dry heaved for a moment, hands on his knees as he bent over the sidewalk. But he didn't vomit, despite how he tried.

He straightened after a moment. Wiping the spit from his chin with his sleeve. Hannibal would have to wash it as soon as they got home. Will slide back into the car, "Thanks," He mumbled.

"We should probably get some food in you. Your blood sugar will still be low and you're probably dehydrated."

Will nodded mutely.

Hannibal gripped the wheel tighter. He didn't know what to do. Will was in pain and he could not fix him. In his life, he was rarely the one to bring comfort, to heal. He had been the destroyer, the morbid artist, the hedonistic sadist. Yet for Will he wanted none of those things. He wanted to keep Will safe, preferably in his home, where Will wouldn't have to face whatever— whoever— was out to get him. At least not while he was terrified.

"Can we get Taco Bell?"

Out of all the things Hannibal wanted for Will, Taco Bell was not included. But his mongoose looked so sad, that Hannibal was pulling into the drive thru before his taste buds revolted. Will ordered a couple tacos and water, Hannibal just got tea. They sat in the parking lot, and Will attempted to eat. His mongoose could barely get a mouthful down before beginning to sniffle and turn his face away. Hannibal tried to imagine that it was the greasy food turning Will's stomach, but he could not get the memory of Will's terror from his mind.

"You were right," Will said eventually.

"Normally am," Hannibal agreed lightly, hoping to humor Will.

His mongoose smiled softly but sadly.

"You guessed it today. I try to hide it, but I think it's become such a part of me, that I can't hide. I can't pretend. It's just who I am."

"And who are you?"

Will smiled sardonically, "I'm fucking broken. Abused. I don't seem to be able to determine what's best for me. I turn to the wrong people all the time. I get hurt, and it's all my fault. I'm like a beaten dog, returning to its master even though I know I could run."

"Why don't you run?"

"I've tried getting away. This isn't my first try, believe me... But I always get dragged back to where I belong."

"You don't belong with someone who hurts you."

"Maybe. Maybe I do. Maybe I was made for it. It's like a dingy out in the ocean constantly pounded by waves. The waves do what waves do, and the dingy is anchored to take every crashing wave."

Hannibal reached out and took Will's hand. He bent and kissed the top reverently. If Will was anything, he was a god to be worshiped. Hannibal would devote himself to his living God.

"Tides change," Hannibal whispered, "I wish for only calm waters, to keep you safe."

"It seems impossible," Will muttered, a few tears had slipped down his face, "It keeps coming."

"I will stop it," He thumbed Will's tears away, "I'll lasso the moon and drag the waters away."

Will snorted at the ridiculous notion, and Hannibal smiled having humored his Will. Will leaned forward, and his head rested against Hannibal's chest. Hannibal wrapped his arms around the mongoose. He'd be safe there.

*

It felt like an hourglass had been turned, and every second a grain of sand fell, signaling the end was near. It was a dream, living in D.C., going to college, meeting Hannibal. But he was quickly approaching the end. He would wake, and Mason would be there. Because Mason was always there.

Will held on to Hannibal, pressing his face into the man's collar, hoping and praying he could stay for a little longer. Hannibal was the best thing that had happened to him. He cared for him more than any other person. No one had been so good to him. He would miss him. He didn't want to go.

The fast food wrappers crinkled and fell to floor. Will let out a choked laugh, the ridiculousness of fast food in Hannibal's pristine car. Hannibal chuckled too. But they fell back into silence, still holding each other.

"I like you Will," Hannibal murmured softly.

Will breathed deeply, he knew that. He knew Hannibal desired him. The way he looked at him, the way he kissed him– the man definitely liked him. But the softness of his voice. The timidity was new. Will could hear the vulnerability, the fear in the statement. Hannibal liked him. It was more than just a desire or lust. Will pulled away, looking at the man, sitting so open and readable.

Hannibal brushed his hand through Will's hair, tracing behind his ear, "I find that my thoughts often turn to you, there's not an hour that goes by that I haven't thought about you."

Will bite his lip. Hannibal knew how to charm.

"I want to know what you think. I want to see the way your brow furrows when your mind is going too fast. I want to hold you when you sleep. I want to hear you laugh. You're the object of my desires, and yet... I worry constantly for you."

"I'm trouble, aren't I?" Will smiled.

And Hannibal smiled back, "Constant trouble. Refusing to wear a coat and forcing me to make sandwiches for every meal– you know there is more than one meal I can make, yes?"

"I like sandwiches," Will said in mock horror.

"I know you do, and I'm becoming quite good at making them."

Will scooted closer, "There's always room for improvement."

"Yes, you're right. I shall have to continue to test my skills on you. But, It's not taxing, not when you're there to grade my work." Hannibal said softly because Will was leaning in and

kissing him. Hannibal was warm, and the lines of his body were strong. He was caring and sweet. Charming and endearing. And he liked Will.

He likes me.

Will licked at Hannibal's mouth until the man opened with a laugh. Will was smiling himself as he fucked Hannibal's mouth with his tongue. The hot wet sensations made him dizzy with lust. He needed to be closer, so he wriggled his way out of his seat and on to Hannibal's lap. He straddled Hannibal, his hands cupping his face, not allowing the older student a way to escape the heated kiss.

But Hannibal seemed to have no plans on leaving. His large hands held Will's waist, and pulled him closer. Will gasped as their bodies met all warm and passionate. He rolled his hips, letting himself enjoy the sensation of being against Hannibal. The man wouldn't mind Will's lust, because *he liked him*, and judging by the prodding hardness beneath him, Hannibal was enjoying himself too.

Hannibal groaned into the kiss as Will pressed against him, his hands gripping Will's waist, supporting him as Will slowly thrust against him.

"Mylimasis," Hannibal moaned when Will released his mouth.

"Mylimasis— what is that?" Will asked, diving back to Hannibal's mouth for another sloppy kiss.

"It's you," Hannibal murmured, his breath warm against Will's face, "It means beloved."

"God—" Will gasped, pressing his mouth against the man's. Hannibal could say such incredible things. He made Will feel things he'd never felt before. Will was overwhelmed so he curled, pressing his ear to Hannibal's heart. He wanted Hannibal, but more than just his body. He wanted him to hold him, he wanted him to keep caring and never let him go. He didn't want to go back to Mason. He wanted to stay with Hannibal.

"I— I think I like you too," Will said softly.

Hannibal's arms wrapped around him. Hannibal was pressing kisses to his head. Not demanding anything, only showing his devotion. Will clung to Hannibal, trying to think of a way to sink inside him, to tie him to Hannibal so he couldn't leave.

"This is going to sound stupid," Will said, glad he was hidden.

"I doubt that," Hannibal said endearingly and he rubbed his hands soothingly up and down his back.

"Will you be my boyfriend?" Will asked quickly, "I know it's stupid, it like something a 6th grader would ask—"

"I would love to be your boyfriend," Hannibal answered, chasing away any fears Will had, "I probably would have loved to be your boyfriend in 6th grade too. Imagine our junior prom. I would have made you wear a matching tuxedo with me. Asked for every dance."

Will giggled, imagining it, “I would have told you to go fuck yourself the first time, but you would have kept asking.”

“I imagine so,” Hannibal sighed, “Would I have gotten the dance?”

“Yes... eventually. But you’ve gotten yourself in some trouble, I won’t leave after just one dance.”

“No,” Hannibal replied, “And neither would I. I’d keep you on the dance floor, until the janitor kicks us out and I’d dance you home, but I’d never leave.”

Will snuggled closer, “Good. Don’t let me go.”

Hannibal promised, “Never.”

It twists and rives

Hannibal held his hand when they ate breakfast, when they drove to campus, when they went to the gym. It was a constant connection between their hands. Will felt stronger with Hannibal's hand in his. They belonged together. And they were officially together as boyfriends.

To Hannibal's delight, Will agreed to watch his swim practices. Mainly because Will did not want to be alone. He was terrified Mason or one of *his* cronies would show up. There had not been a word from or about Mason, but Will could feel him creeping closer. Time was running out. A ticking time bomb before everything would fall apart. Which is why he refused to let Hannibal out of his sight. Likewise, the older student was very keen on keeping Will near him as well.

Which left him with little choice, but to watch practically naked men splash around a pool at six in the morning.

Not such a bad way to start the day.

Hannibal rose from the water, his skin glistened with the water, his defined muscles making Will sweat behind the ears. He was once again confronted with how utterly gorgeous Hannibal was, and more so, how utterly gorgeous his *boyfriend* was.

Will grinned and waved from his seat on the bleachers, the indoor pool was warm and he had been lounging and (attempting) to read while Hannibal showed off. It was like Hannibal knew he couldn't keep his gaze away, so the man had flaunted every fucking detail of his angelic body for Will to be distracted by. *The bastard.*

Hannibal walked over to him, dripping wet and with a sheepish grin on his face. Will scowled at him, "I have papers and books, don't you dare splash them."

Hannibal pouted, "I just wanted to give my boyfriend a kiss."

Will's heart fluttered, "Well, you just have to wait until you're dried off."

Hannibal sighed dramatically, slinging a towel around his decadent hips, "Shower with me?"

Will turned red and shook his head, "N-no. Maybe another time."

Hannibal's eyes sparkled and he winked, "Of course mylimasis."

With that he turned and left for the showers, leaving a very flustered Will. Will packed his things and followed Hannibal to the locker rooms, waiting until the man was finished. Hannibal emerged impeccably dressed in slacks and a button up. For half a second Will felt intimidated with his shabby clothes, but Hannibal scooped up his hand and kissed it. And all Will's insecurities seemed to fly away when the man smiled at him, "May I get that kiss now?"

Will nodded. Hannibal drew him close, his large hands holding his waist, while he gently pressed his lips against Will's.

"You smell like pancakes," Hannibal murmured on his lips. Will keened into the kiss, loving the way Hannibal's arms held him. Hannibal's tongue flicked his lips playfully, "Taste like syrup too."

"Because you fed me pancakes for breakfast," Will chuckled.

"Did I? I was too distracted by you to notice," Hannibal pecked his cheek before tucking Will against his side, a protective arm around his shoulders.

Will blushed at the contact. But he allowed it. They were boyfriends after all.

*

Hannibal walked him to all his classes, Will right at his side. He stole a kiss before letting him go, "Don't run off after your classes. I'll be here once you're done."

"You don't have to chauffeur me everywhere," Will said, feeling rather guilty. Hannibal had been showing up at the end of all his classes to take him home or to his next class. It was sweet how Hannibal wanted to be with him and selfishly Will desired the attention and protection Hannibal gave. But Will didn't understand how he was not late for his classes. He felt guilty for being disruptive.

"But I *want* to. And unless you say otherwise, I'll continue," He winked.

Will blushed and punched Hannibal lightly on the chest, "Fine. I'll *allow* it."

"Good. I have a surprise for you after classes."

"What is it?"

Hannibal flicked his nose, "If I told you, it would ruin the surprise."

"If it's another coat, you'll have to return it. I'm going to buy my own and you shouldn't—"

"No, no, darling. Nothing like that."

"Then what is it?"

"You'll have to wait and see."

Will huffed, "You're insufferable."

Hannibal seemed to preen under Will's scrutiny, "If you say so, Will."

Will waved him away, while walking into the classroom, "Bye Hannibal."

"Goodbye my darling!" Hannibal shouted after him. He shook his head. Hannibal really was the worst. In a cute kind of way.

When he got to his seat, Beverly was sitting, grinning up at him like she'd won the lottery.

"What?" Will sighed, slinging his bag on the back of the chair.

"Did I just hear your totally platonic friend Hannibal yell 'my darling' at you?"

Will slid into his seat, afraid he looked like a tomato. "Maybe..."

"Will you have to tell me everything!"

"So we're not totally platonic friends anymore," Will answered sheepishly.

Beverly squealed, "You're dating?"

"Yeah, we're dating," Will ducked his head to hide his grin. It was nice to say those words.

Beverly was delighted and about ready to start shaking and or hugging him. Thankfully, the professor walked in and classroom decorum saved him from being squashed in a Beverly bear hug.

After enduring a morning and afternoon of Beverly pestering with whispers and pokes, classes finally finished. He walked out of the classroom with Beverly and spotted Hannibal leaning against the wall looking like a model ready for the runway. As soon as he spotted Will, he was in front of him pulling him into a hug.

"I missed you, mylimasis," Hannibal breathed into his ear.

Beverly squealed behind them and Will managed to escape Hannibal's impressively entrapping hug. "Uh," he glanced awkwardly between the two, "I told Beverly we're dating. I hope that's ok."

Hannibal kissed him on the forehead, "Of course, Will."

"Now I get to third wheel whenever we have lunch," Beverly laughed in delight.

"Hope it's ok..." Will sheepishly smiled and Hannibal pulled him closer, an arm around his waist.

"Ok?! Will, I've been trying to get you two together since day one!" Beverly laughed.

Will shot her a confused look, surely she didn't mean that, "W-what?"

Beverly rolled her eyes, "I definitely tried ditching you two together alone as much as possible."

"You didn't have class?" Will sputtered

"I had matchmaking," Beverly replied smugly.

Will sputtered for a few more seconds before Hannibal swooped in and saved him, "I for one appreciate your efforts Beverly."

"Thank you Hannibal," She said matter of factly before laughing again, "And congratulations. I'm so happy for you both."

Will still was trying to wrap his head around the fact Beverly had been attempting to matchmake. For all his abilities in reading people, he had missed his own friend's attempts. Thankfully, Hannibal pulled him away, still baffled by Beverly.

"It was good seeing you, Beverly, but I have a surprise and dinner for Will at home." Hannibal explained.

Beverly winked at Will, "Have fun, Will."

Will blushed, "Bye Bev," before Hannibal walked him away.

"How was your day, Mylimasis?" Hannibal asked softly, his fingers rubbing soothing circles on Will's hip as they walked together. Will was once more tucked against Hannibal.

"It was nice," Will said contentedly.

"Good. I'm glad it was nice," Hannibal pressed an endearing kiss on his forehead.

Will giggled with delight. He leaned into Hannibal, "How was your day?"

"Long," Hannibal answered, "Couldn't bear missing you."

Will laughed, "You're too sentimental."

"Maybe, but when it comes to you, I find myself a great too many things."

"Oh yeah?" Will asked curiously, "Like what?"

Hannibal kissed his temple again, "I'm far too sentimental. I'm too happy— or more happy than I've ever been before. I find I'm only content when you're near and happy. I'm utterly enthralled by you and your thoughts. You make me feel uncertain where I'm normally steadfast. A disconcerting feeling. I don't have a clear way to see the future with you— only that I want you in that future. I *need* you in that future..."

Hannibal's grip tightened, and Will found himself pressed against him, like Hannibal wanted to surround him entirely. Will couldn't say he was entirely opposed to the idea. It would be nice to curl inside Hannibal, safe and secure.

Will stopped their walk, turning into Hannibal's arms. He gazed fondly up at the puzzled man, "You *are* too sentimental."

He kissed Hannibal sweetly, tilting up to brush their lips together. He drew back smiling up at Hannibal, "But I'm sentimental too."

Hannibal grinned and pulled him in for another kiss, "What did I do to deserve you?"

*Cared for me. Comforted me. Protected me. Healed and mended all my wounds. Held me when I was scared. Understood me when I couldn't speak. ... **You love me** ...* Will's mind screamed

But Will didn't say any of this. He nuzzled against Hannibal's chin and they tangled their arms together and walked to the car. Both equally stirred at their own emotions for the other.

*

"So, what's my surprise?"

They had just finished dinner and Hannibal was attempting to force him to eat another piece of pie, but Will was stuffed. After a full dinner and two pieces of pie, Will knew he'd be sick if he ate any more. Hannibal seemed to love cultivating gluttony in him. They had devoured almost the whole pie in one sitting.

Hannibal squeezed his hand before going to the other room. He returned with a rectangular wrapped box that he placed in front of him. The wrapping paper was a light blue and Will was almost sad he'd have to tear it.

Hannibal kissed his forehead before sitting back down beside him, "Open it."

Will's fingers glided across the package, "Did you wrap it yourself?"

"Yes. Thought about adding a bow."

"Why didn't you?"

"It was frilly. You don't need frills. You deserve something elegant," Hannibal explained.

"If you'd have given me a box with a bow, I'd probably have told you to keep your damn ribbons for somebody else." Will surmised.

"Yes. All the more reason for simplicity."

"Simplicity? I thought you said I deserved something elegant!" Will mock pouted.

Hannibal laughed, "Elegance is best when simple. Now open your present, I'm quite nervous."

Will rolled his eyes and peeled the paper back. And blinked in surprise.

It was a phone.

Will stared at it. He didn't say anything, just kept staring.

Hannibal cleared his throat, "Do you like it?"

Will glanced at him then back at the box, "It's a phone."

"Yes, it is," Hannibal confirmed dumbly.

He had been given a phone before. Mason had given him one. Suddenly Mason was no longer just at the shelter, he was at home, at school, in the library. He tracked Will's location constantly. He would turn up when Will didn't expect him to. Demand favors. It was like Mason was always with him.

Will had liked the phone well enough. He could take pictures and text classmates. He could look up questions he had over homework. There were even puzzles and games he could play. But all the benefits seemed diminished when Mason would text him, demanding pictures and videos. Will had been terrified his dad would walk away in and find him filming pantless and trying to finger himself for the camera. Because Mason had ordered it, so he had to.

Would Hannibal want him to film himself too? Would he want pictures texted hourly? Daily? Would he demand Will's attention every moment he wasn't at school?

Will felt sick staring at the phone. He really thought Hannibal was completely different from Mason. But maybe this was how all normal relationships went, and Will was the problem.

"You don't like it."

Will blinked at Hannibal. His throat felt tight like it'd be hard to speak. He looked away, ashamed. Hannibal cleared his throat, "I apologize, Will. I suppose this is too big of a gift. I can return it if you'd like."

"Why?" Will asked quietly.

"My darling, if you don't like it, you don't have to keep it. I'll take it back," Hannibal explained.

"No, no—" Will shook his head, "I mean, why a phone?"

Hannibal blinked at him confused, "What?"

"Why are you giving me a phone?" Will repeated, sounding frustrated.

"I want you to have it."

Will huffed, "Yes, but *why*?"

Hannibal reached over and tried to take his hand, Will ripped it away from. Hannibal looked hurt, but Will felt hurt and angry. "*Why*," He hissed.

Hannibal leaned back, studying him intensely, "I want you to be safe."

Will blinked dumbly.

Hannibal looked down, he seemed upset at himself, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be so overbearing. It's not a good gift. I'm sorry."

Hannibal took the box, attempting to hide it away, but Will grabbed his hand, "What do you mean safe?"

Hannibal looked confused, "It's just a precaution. If I'm not there, you could call me– or call the police. It's just in case something happens. But nothing is going to happen, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have gotten–"

"You won't track me?" Will asked.

Hannibal's eyes widened, "No, darling."

"You won't –you won't ask me for– for..." Will stuttered, his cheeks red with embarrassment.

Hannibal stared, not comprehending Will's question, "I won't ask you for anything Will."

"Pictures?" Will whispered fearfully.

Hannibal's brow furrowed, "Pictures?"

Will's eyes filled with tears, and he hid his face in his hands. "You'll make me take pictures."

"Will, I–"

"You'll want to film everything. You want nudes," Will sobbed.

Hannibal dropped to his knees before Will, prying the younger man's hands away from his face. Hannibal gasped Will's hands in his own as they shook with Will's trembling cries.

"I don't want photos," Hannibal tried to sooth.

"You do!" Will insisted through his sobs.

"I don't want pictures, Will," Hannibal repeated firmly.

"Phones are just another way to have sex," Will argued.

"Phones are not for sending sexual pictures or videos," Hannibal squeezed Will's hand, "I promise, Mylimasis. It's not for photos."

"It's not?" Will asked, looking frightened yet hopeful through his tear stained face.

"No, Mylimasis. I don't want that."

Will's lip trembled, but he had managed to stop sobbing. He blinked down at Hannibal, kneeling before him and stroking his hands, the perfect image of caring. "How do I believe you?"

Hannibal kissed his hand still clasped in his kind hold, "I promise, Will. I don't break my promises. But if you need assurance, I won't have your number, I won't be able to text or call you. The phone is only there for your protection, so you can call the police."

"What if I need you?" Will asked softly.

"Then I would answer, but only if you wish me to," Hannibal said gently.

"Mason gave me a phone..."

Will was suddenly sobbing again. He couldn't take it, so he slid off the chair into Hannibal's lap. Hannibal pulled him into a tight embrace. Will curled in his arms, hiding his face in the man's chest as he cried.

He cried at how much it hurt inside. How every memory of Mason was alive and replaying over and over. His innocence was stolen and now it felt like it was happening all over. He knew Hannibal wouldn't hurt him, but the gift had triggered something. He didn't know how to move on and he didn't know how to voice his struggles. So he cried, hoping Hannibal wouldn't tire from his aggravating antics.

Hannibal didn't. He rocked him gently on the dining room floor, their pie and plates forgotten up above. He hushed every cry and murmured soft assurances in a language Will couldn't understand. And when Will's sobs turned to choked sniffles, Hannibal's hand continued to rub gentle circles on his back.

"Would you like me to take you to your room?" Hannibal asked softly, as Will's breathing became calmer.

Will shook his head no into the man's chest. He really didn't want to be apart from Hannibal, but the bedroom felt too intimate.

"The couch?" Hannibal asked, his hands still calming in their soothing motions.

Will rasped in a barely audible voice, "Just don't leave."

Hannibal kissed the top of his head, "Never, Mylimasis."

Hannibal scooped him up from the floor, and Will clung to him, still not daring to look out from his hiding place against the man. Hannibal sat on the couch, reclining slightly against the side. Will curled on his chest, the rise and fall of Hannibal's chest lulling him into a sort of half awake coma. He let his eyes close and tried to block out all the horrible memories with Hannibal's loving promise, gentle touch, and soft words.

But the line is tangled

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hannibal didn't sleep.

Will was snoring softly, resting against his chest. Hannibal lightly drew patterns on his mongoose's back. It would be quite easy to fall asleep like this, but Hannibal's mind kept him awake.

He kept turning over in his head, how this *Mason* could cause so much pain without any retribution. Hannibal hated him which was a new emotion for Hannibal. For much of his life apathy ruled his emotions with curiosity filling the holes. But now a mixture of hatred and curiosity filled him. The pain which this man must have inflicted on his mongoose, had to be extraordinary. For his Will was incredibly strong, so for him to still have his claws so deeply embedded in Will was monstrous.

Hannibal knew he would kill the man. He had decided it when Will first said his name. Mason Verger was dead.

Except that he wasn't.

He was staying in a villa across the river searching for Will. Hannibal knew this because he had skipped classes and spent several days researching and tracking the man down.

He had been easy to find. A millionaire at the age of 24, the 35 year old, Mason Verger was a king in his own world. He inherited his father's pig farms, the industrialized farming complex sending bank loads of money into his pockets. He had enough money to clear any of his many indiscretions. He had an unsurprising lack of police records, mainly because he hushed his victims or paid off the police. But still enough stories leaked through to show that Mason Verger was a vile pedophile and a cruel manipulative rapist.

Hannibal had driven out to the villa to see if there was any way he might murder the man covertly. Unfortunately, Mason must have many enemies for he surrounded himself with a small army of bodyguards. There would be no accessing him secretly.

Hannibal considered meeting him.

Verger currently had an online ad that would award anyone for any information on Will Graham and an additional ten thousand dollar reward for his exact location. Hannibal could easily get an audience. But he had little interest in meeting Mason Verger except to rip the man to shreds. He only hoped none of Will's classmates would give him up. The ad was titled something sickening like 'Bring Will Home'. It made Will out to be a pathetic invalid needing brought back into the fold.

Hannibal pulled his mongoose closer. Will was already home in his mind. No one was taking him away. Will grunted in his sleep, but snuggled closer. Hannibal pressed a kiss to Will's head. He'd keep his Will safe.

When dawn came Hannibal woke Will. He slowly sat up, moving Will to sit up with him. Will moaned unhappily and buried his face back into Hannibal's chest.

"Good morning darling," Hannibal whispered through his rough morning voice. He felt Will shiver against him.

"Jesus," Will muttered, "Is it morning already?"

"Yes, my darling."

"Shit, I didn't mean for you to sleep on the couch. God, that was probably uncomfortable." Will said guiltily.

"It's quite fine, Will. I'm happy to accept any cuddles you will allow." Will looked down frowning and Hannibal assumed he felt embarrassed about the night before. He changed the subject quickly, "I have to go to swim practice, but you can stay here if you'd like. I can come back for you."

Will sat up, shaking his head, "No, that's stupid. I'll just go with you."

"Alright," Hannibal agreed easily. He had not been entirely willing to leave Will, even at home. Will needed to stay with him for his own safety. Thankfully Will wasn't too hard to convince. Hannibal stood, stretching his cramped back, "I'm going to dress then we can have breakfast on the go, I believe there's some homemade granola bars, if you'd like."

He moved to leave.

"Hannibal!" Will's abrupt call stopped him. He turned, Will was red and fidgeting nervously. His poor Will.

"Yes, Mylimasis?"

"Uh, just— I'm sorry. About last night. I didn't mean to freak out."

Hannibal's heart melted. If he knew it wouldn't overwhelm Will, he probably would have kissed the daylights out of the younger man. But everything has to be slow with Will. Hannibal smiled encouragingly, "It's completely understandable. I should have spoken to you first. I'll take the phone back today."

"No! I want it," Will blurted out, "Please. It was just a lot yesterday. I don't know why I freaked out so much."

Hannibal looked at him critically. Will and Hannibal both knew: Mason Verger had abused his power over Will. But Will was unlikely going to speak it. And Hannibal would never push him.

"I think you do know," Hannibal settled on after a moment, "But that doesn't matter. You can of course have the phone. It's still on the table."

Will nodded.

Hannibal hesitated, "You would tell me? If you needed to? You'd tell me why things bother you?"

Will flushed, looking down, "It's a lot Hannibal."

"I know, but I'm here for you. Anything you want to talk about."

All Hannibal got was a curt nod, but he supposed that was better than nothing.

*

Will played with the new phone all morning and at practice. He had Beverly's number and had texted her his, to which she sent a litany of emojis and gifs back. He found that he could type his papers on the phone (though it took some work coordinating his thumbs) but it excited him. It meant he didn't have to go to the library for hours to borrow their computers or ask to use Hannibal's laptop. He knew Hannibal would give it away instantly, which was nice, but not good in the long run. Will wanted to be independent and Hannibal needed to succeed in his studies too.

When he discovered the voice to text application, he jumped with excitement. He immediately wanted to try it out, but the pool was too loud. Hannibal still had twenty minutes left so Will slipped from the gym and went to the quiet of the locker room. He began reading his notes, which miraculously turned to text before his eyes. The wonders of technology. He piped down when he heard a couple people enter the locker room and get in the shower. Luckily he was behind a wall of lockers so they didn't see him loitering around. He gave a sigh when he recognized the voices of Hannibal's teammates.

"I don't know man, seems weird," said one.

"It's free money!"

"Yeah, but there's got to be a catch. Nobody just gives money away for information."

Will snorted. Hadn't these idiots ever heard of bribery? Very popular business.

"Look, we just snap a picture and tell him he's here."

"Yeah, except Lecter's practically shackled to him. He'd never let us. The guy's a beast."

Will's heart froze. Lecter? Hannibal Lecter? But Hannibal rarely engaged with other people? Did that mean the person they had information on was him?

"Lecter doesn't have to know. Hell, Will doesn't either! Just get a picture when they're not looking."

"Seems shady..." the one voice grumbled.

"It's ten thousand dollars! Surely you got something you want. Come on, man. This is a great opportunity!"

"Well, we gotta get a picture then. When Hannibal isn't looking."

"Or Will. Damn, that guy gives me the creeps."

Will felt anger boiling in his chest. They thought he was a creep? When they were fucking talking about getting a picture of him? Fucking hypocrites. Will wanted to jump around the corner, smash their skulls against the shower tiles. Maybe that would teach them not to fuck around with him.

"Will?"

Will spun around in surprise. Hannibal was there looking worried, his hair still damp from the pool. His clothes sticking strangely to his body as if he'd dressed in a hurry. He stared questionably at him. Will raised a finger to his lips and leaned close, whispering, "They're saying somebody's offering money for infor—"

"I know," Hannibal said instantly.

Will blanched, "What? What do you mean you *know*."

Hannibal took his hand, "Come, I'll tell you. Let's get out of here for now."

Hannibal hurried him from the locker room. Will realized that practice hadn't quite finished. What was Hannibal doing? They made it to the library, it was quiet so early in the morning. Hannibal slipped them into a study room, glancing outside before closing the door.

"What the hell is going on?" Will asked as soon as the door closed.

"Will, darling, there's nothing to be afraid of—"

"Bullshit. *You're* scared."

Hannibal bristled, "I'm not. I'm just... worried."

Will huffed, "Yeah right. Now, are you going to tell me what's wrong or what?"

Hannibal sighed, rubbing his eyes, "I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to be worried or frightened."

Will crossed his arms, "Not a great start, Hannibal. *Tell me*."

Hannibal huffed, but spoke, "Mason's put out a monetary reward for information on your whereabouts."

"What?"

"Rewards for information. Ten thousand for a confirmed location."

Will wasn't surprised. It was something Mason would do. It was predictable. What hurt him was Hannibal. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Hannibal took his hands, holding them against his chest. His eyes looked sorrowful, Will noted. *But he had still lied, or withheld the truth whatever.*

"Mylimasis, I was going to tell you, but you were so upset yesterday and I didn't want to upset you further. I'm sorry."

"You're fucking stupid!" Will said furiously. He gripped Hannibal's shirt fiercely

Hannibal's eyes fluttered and he murmured, "My darling— I didn't mean to. I should have—"

"Shoulda, woulda, coulda—I don't care! You don't hold information from me!" Will pushed him and turned away, arms protectively crossed against his chest, trying to hold in his shudders.

Hannibal pursed his lips, "I would have told you at the right moment. You weren't ready."

"You tell me things immediately!" Will yelled.

"When you're crying in my arms? When you can't separate my actions with those of your ex? When you refuse to listen or be comforted?" Hannibal argued, standing his ground.

"You tell me!" Will shouted, pointing accusatively, "You tell me everything!"

"Everything?" Hannibal asked, his voice hard and eyes weary.

"Everything!" Will agreed adamantly.

Hannibal drew back, his shoulders raised as if trying to brace himself from a storm.

"He's here."

"What?"

"You wanted to know everything. So there it is. Mason is here. He's at a villa across the river."

"You know?" Will asked incredulously.

"I went over there yesterday."

"You saw him?"

"Yes. Messy imprudent blonde fellow with four bodyguards tagging along with him."

"Did you speak with him?"

"No. I was spying. I had the bright idea to kill him."

Will laughed harshly, "Right."

Hannibal stared hard, "It's true. I was going to murder him."

Will stared back, a grin still frozen on his face, "What?"

"I want to kill him, Will. The desire is still prevalent."

Will took a step back, "N-no. You're joking. That's not right."

"No, it's highly justified," Hannibal said bluntly, "I want to torture and kill him."

Will felt dizzy. He shook his head trying to clear his mind, "I-I gotta go."

He tried slipping past Hannibal, but Hannibal grabbed him and pulled him back, "Will, you need to listen to me."

"Listen to you?! When you want to kill him? Murder him?" Will wrenched his arm from Hannibal's grip. *Why was Hannibal saying those things?*

"Yes. I want to kill him. I meant to kill him yesterday, but there were too many people."

Will gaped at him, "You're just joking."

"You wanted the truth."

"That's not– that's not..." But Will trailed off, seeing how serious Hannibal looked. He was telling the truth, however dastardly the consequences. Hannibal wanted to kill Mason– torture Mason. And from the look in Hannibal's eyes, he'd do it. He'd do it well. He'd do it with cruel precision that could only come from a master skillsman.

Someone who's done it before.

"You– You've..." Will stared wide eyed at the new Hannibal he was beginning to see. But perhaps it wasn't new. Perhaps it had always been there, hidden below the surface. Perhaps he had seen it the whole time and chose to ignore it. *Or even liked its power.*

"You've killed someone before." Will whispered.

"Yes."

Will slumped in his chair and covered his face. He tried to take calming breaths. His brain was jumping from one problem to another.

Hannibal had killed someone– probably murdered them by how easily he talked about killing Mason. He was living with a murderer. Which meant he was going to lose his warm bed and roof over his head. He'd be back in his freezing car. He couldn't go back to Hannibal's house. The place he had begun to think of as home.

“Will, just breathe— it’s alright.”

He couldn’t go back to the man he trusted. Used to trust? Did Will still trust him? Could he, after what he knew? Did this mean they weren’t boyfriends— should Will break it off? What would Hannibal do? Would Hannibal kill him? No, that didn’t make sense to Will. But then again, he felt confused and blindsided. Maybe he didn’t know everything Hannibal was capable of.

“Will, please breathe.”

What should he do? Walk out of the room, never talk to Hannibal again, pretend he never met him? Should he book it to the nearest police station? Crawford would take his statement, who knew if the officer would believe him. How was he supposed to get his things? Would Hannibal even let him leave? Would he trap him like Mason had? Was Hannibal just like Mason?

“Will! Please, Mylimasis breathe!”

Will gasped. His vision was spotted with black dots. He blinked, gasping for air, until his vision cleared. Hannibal was kneeling in front of him. His expression was worried and fearful. Will hated it. He preferred Hannibal to be strong and confident. The mask was gone, and the real Hannibal was vulnerable and scared.

“Mylimasis,” Hannibal sighed, relieved, “Breathe for me now.”

Will took some more shaky breaths and nodded. Hannibal’s worried frown lessened. He realized the man’s hands were clutching his legs, like he was trying to hold and ground himself with Will.

“I’m sorry, Will,” Hannibal said softly.

Will didn’t know why, but tears rolled down his cheeks and he wiped at them with his hand. Somehow Hannibal’s admission made everything even more confusing and difficult. Will shook his head, trying to clear his head.

“I—I—” Will tried to speak. Hannibal looked up at him, clinging to every word, “I—need— need t—to think. *Please* .”

“Let me take you home,” Hannibal offered, his eyes still filled with concern.

But Will shook his head, “I—I need to be alone right now, Hannibal.”

“Will, please—” Hannibal tried.

“I need to think by myself. *Please* let me think, Hannibal,” Will begged, feeling at the end of his sanity.

With some effort Hannibal released his legs and stood. He wasn’t meeting Will’s gaze and Will was certain the man had a few stray tears he was desperately trying to hide.

With a gentle hand on his back, Hannibal helped him stand. Confused still, Will didn't bother to shy away. The hand was nice. Strong and firm like he'd come to know Hannibal as. He needed Hannibal to be strong. Hannibal guided him to the door. Will clutched the handle and turned to his friend. Hannibal's eyes were misty, and the mask was again trying to shield just how hurt and scared the older student was. Will wanted to comfort him.

"Hannibal," He said softly.

The man raised his head. A sharp intake of breath followed, as if Hannibal was trying to control his emotions. Will raised a shaky hand and grasped Hannibal's still damp shirt, pulling him near. He looked up at Hannibal, begging with his eyes not to change, not to become Mason, not to fall.

"Kiss me," Will demanded, his voice barely able to hide the emotion.

A slight look of confusion passed over Hannibal, but changed to adoration and awe. Ever so slowly, Hannibal leaned down. His eyes never leaving Will's. His lips were warm and chapped. But Will leaned into it. It felt like a goodbye kiss, which Will hated.

This wasn't a goodbye. Was it?

He broke the kiss, looking down. He felt ashamed of thinking of the end but it flooded his mind with such intensity. Hannibal, the kind innocent Hannibal he knew, was gone. What was left was a stranger that Will didn't know. He felt more tears well in his eyes and turned to hide them, "I gotta go."

Will ran. Leaving the library and school behind, he fled from the sanctuary and the man he had fallen in love with.

Chapter End Notes

The string chokes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

For the first few blocks, Will stumbled blindly. He managed not to get run over by any cars thankfully, but he wasn't quite sure where he was going. When he finally slowed his weary flight and looked about, he found he was in that same park he'd been mugged in several weeks ago.

He shivered, suddenly feeling as if there were eyes on him. It was probably just his fear and trauma talking, but he turned round and headed to where he believed his car was still.

He thanked whatever god was watching over him, that the car was still hidden behind the dumpster. He climbed into the front seat. It was cold, clammy, and empty. All his belongings were safely in Hannibal's guestroom. He put his head down on the steering wheel. What was he supposed to do now?

He jumped when he felt a buzz in his back pocket. He drew out the phone wearily. What if Hannibal was messaging him? He had asked for space— why wasn't he giving it?

Will opened his phone a little too eagerly, but sighed when he saw Beverly's text. She was wondering why he missed class. He felt disappointed it was Beverly. He wanted Hannibal to text him. He wanted Hannibal to follow him like he had done that first night. He wanted him to take control and not let him sit shivering in his broken down car.

But Will had asked to be alone, and Hannibal, sweet kind adoring Hannibal, would give him everything he asked for. Will huffed and sank into the seat. *Damn kind murderous boyfriends* .

He opened his phone once more and texted Beverly.

Do you mind if I crash at your place?

Beverly immediately responded: **Yes!! Come over— you bringing the boyfriend? ;)**

Will sighed. What should he say? *Hannibal just admitted to being a murderer ...and I don't know how to feel about it?*

Or, Hannibal kills people :)

Or, Hannibal wants to kill my ex, like physically destroy him, and I don't know if I'd mind???

Or, Is it weird to kinda want somebody dead? Asking for a friend...

Will quickly typed up a message: **We had an argument. I'm not feeling great...**

Beverly tried to call him immediately. He declined the call. He didn't know if he could talk coherently without choking up.

I can't talk right now. Is it still ok to come over?

Beverly immediately answered. **Fuck Will, of course you can still come over— What happened? Do I need to punch him?**

Will smiled slightly. Beverly was a good friend. **It's complicated.**

Beverly sent a gif of somebody putting their boxing gloves on. She joked. **Lemme know where and when.**

Will chuckled. **Thanks Bev... Just don't punch him yet.**

Sure thing boss. She texted back. She told him her dorm and room number. They agreed to meet there after lunch.

Will sighed resting his head back on the seat. He hoped Beverly wouldn't ask too many questions. He didn't even know how to answer his own questions.

Hannibal could and would kill for him. Neat and studious Hannibal Lecter was hiding behind a mask. What was actually here? Who was Hannibal? Had he been made a complete fool falling for another sick monster?

That made his stomach turn. He had to remind himself that Hannibal was nothing like Mason. Hannibal had never tried to hurt him, never intentionally trapped him, never used him like Mason had. No, Hannibal was nothing like Mason. *But that didn't mean he wasn't a monster .*

A different type of monster. Will wanted to stop monsters like Mason from hurting people. That's why he wanted to study criminology. And yet, Hannibal also wanted to stop Mason too. *Could monsters fight other monsters?*

Will tried to squash the thought. All his morals told him that that was wrong, but a little nagging voice in his head said: *you want Mason dead too .*

Lost in his thoughts, he was jolted back to reality by the door opening.

*

Hannibal rarely felt sick, but after Will tore his heart in half as he fled, Hannibal went to the bathroom and puked. He flushed his mouth out, trying to get rid of the bile taste. He supposed he deserved this in some way. He had disappointed Will. Ruined whatever trust the younger student had in him.

A bitter taste in his mouth would remind him of his trespasses.

He wondered if he should call his aunt. To try and get her advice on the situation. But doing that would be admitting he's murdering again, something his aunt knew but despised greatly. Wasn't honorable enough for her, though, revenge murder, she might better understand. He still couldn't confide in her, not like he had Will.

Despite Will's running away, the younger man's reaction had been a relief. There was no horror or fear in his eyes, only a deep sadness. Almost as if Will was saddened more by Hannibal's deceit rather than his actions. Hannibal hadn't even told him that he had killed Will's attacker. How would the mongoose react to that information?

Hannibal sighed, staring at himself in the mirror. Two months ago he would have despised the way he looked. Wet, unkept hair, clothes hurriedly thrown on, wrinkled and damp. Even his eyes showed weariness and distress. He was vulnerable. Vulnerable for Will.

Hannibal straightened. He tugged at his clothes until they looked slightly more put together. Not the immaculate image he was used to, but enough that he could go outside. He ran his fingers through his hair, wishing he had hair products to keep it from falling into his face. He managed to comb it into a semi-appropriate look, before quickly leaving.

He went to his classes, not listening at all, instead thinking about Will.

What was Will doing?

Was he ok?

Did he need Hannibal's help?

What if he was in trouble?

Would he go to the police?

Why did he have to be alone?

Had Will eaten lunch?

Was he hungry?

Hannibal drifted through the afternoon, his mind obsessed with his Will. When classes were finally over, he didn't know if he should go home. Will had asked him for space, Hannibal should probably give it to him. If Will was at home, he should probably stay away. Hannibal went to the library and slumped at a table, just waiting and thinking.

It was past dinner time when his phone buzzed. He rushed to grab it and answered in a hurry without looking, "Will?"

"It's Bev," Beverly answered.

"Oh." There was silence on the line for a moment before Hannibal asked, "Is Will with you?"

Beverly sighed, "No. He's supposed to be, but he never showed."

"What do you mean?" Hannibal asked sharply.

"He was supposed to come over to mine after lunch, but he hasn't shown up."

Hannibal stood up, immediately worried, "Has he said anything?"

"Not a word. I tried texting and calling but he's not answering."

Hannibal cursed. Had he lost his phone? Was he simply ignoring his friends? What if Will had been attacked? What if he was unconscious somewhere? What if Mason—

"Will said you guys had an argument," Beverly prodded.

Hannibal swallowed, "Is that all he said?"

Beverly huffed, "What the hell Hannibal! Did you fucking do something?"

Hannibal was already walking to the door. He needed to get home and look for Will. "It's not like that, Beverly."

"Then what the hell is it like Hannibal? Will was upset— are you the reason?"

Hannibal winced, her words cutting him to the bone. He was the reason. He was the problem. He should have stayed with Will or followed at least him.

"I'm sorry, Beverly. I need to go and find Will."

"Stay away from him Hannibal! He didn't want you—"

Hannibal ended the call. He didn't have time to argue with Beverly. He had to find Will. He went to all the places on campus he knew Will liked to hide. The gym, the study rooms, the library basement. He drove back home slowly, looking down roads and and searching sidewalks. His house was empty. Nothing changed, except a missing part of Hannibal.

He went back to his car, not able to stand the crushing loneliness he suddenly felt in his own home. He went to Will's car then. Will was not in the car. But Hannibal needed to feel close to his mongoose. He went to sit in the car, but that's when he saw it, felt it, smelt it. Blood. On the car door.

Hannibal stared silently at it. Then he turned back to his car, absolutely decided.

He was going to kill Mason Verger and get Will back.

Chapter End Notes

Who needs the next chapter?

Until it snaps

Chapter Notes

Ask and you shall receive...

WARNINGS: Rape, manipulation, drug use, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse

Please heed the warnings when reading. It is truly horrid.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will woke with a start as his body was dropped. He was groggy and his head was reeling. He clutched his skull hoping the pressure would alleviate. He groaned in pain as his tongue dully swiped around his dry mouth, it tasted of bile. Hands were on his arms, rough and biting, he felt a prick. His eyes fluttered open to a bright room.

He didn't recognize anything— it was a big room. A modern living room with stupid white furry carpet and matching white couches. He pressed his eyes closed at the far too bright room. Where was he?

The last thing he remembered was trying to figure out what to do with Hannibal. And then the door had opened. He'd been dragged out. Had he screamed? He was fairly certain he had screamed. Then everything was blank.

The hands ripped the needle from his arm and he yelped in pain, finally blinking frantically and focusing upwards.

The leering face of Mason Verger met him and he froze, clutching his arm.

Mason laughed at him, “The princess finally wakes from her beauty sleep.”

“Mason?” Will whispered fearfully. Not wanting to believe his eyes.

“And recognizes her prince!” Mason cheered delightfully, “Fuck, baby, I thought Cordell was a little rough on you, but you’re catching on fine.”

Will wanted to bolt. Escape back to Hannibal who would protect him. But he was paralyzed. Just like with the man at the bar, he couldn't move. He couldn't say anything. He was immobilized with fear.

“Jeez, no need for the long face, come on, I got just the right thing for you,” Mason walked over to a shiny bar and pulled out several bottles. Will took the opportunity to slowly sit up. Immediately his stomach rolled and he gagged, vomit at the back of his throat. He swallowed

hard, pushing the bile down. He didn't like this. He needed to get out of here and to Hannibal.

“You know, in fairytales the prince wakes the princess with a kiss, but ya see, it was actually a symbol of a loss of innocence— of purity. But you can't exactly be saying the princess ain't a fucking virgin no more to the kiddies,” Mason laughed as he poured the drinks.

Will tried to steady himself, trying to look for an exit. There were glass windows and a patio door looking out to a garden. Maybe, maybe if he ran now—

“So princess,” Mason's voice interrupted. The man was standing over him holding a drink and grinning, “How do you wanna be woken up? A kiss or fucked up the ass?”

Will swallowed, a bit of him dying as he found he couldn't move from Mason's gaze. He reached for the drink, speaking slowly, “I'd take a whiskey.”

Mason burst into laughter and let him take the glass, “There's my Will.”

Mason ruffled his hair and flopped down beside him. Will jumped a little, but Mason slung an arm around him and pulled him hard, forcing him to lean into him. Will stiffly leaned against his tormentor, the glass of whiskey trembling in his hand.

“Drink up, babe,” Mason ordered, his grip on Will hard and threatening, “It's your favorite whiskey too, because I'm being kind.”

Will had no other choice but to raise it to his lips and sip. It was good smooth whiskey, Will's favorite. Mason wasn't lying. Will swallowed the sip and let the glass lower. He didn't want to drink anymore, not with Mason pressing him. It was dangerous.

Mason's fingers tugged at his hair, “Whatchya say?”

“Thank you, Mason,” Will responded instantly, “It's good.”

“I know it is,” Mason's fingers wrapped cruelly through his hair and Will found his hair held hard and painfully. Mason leaned in so close that Will flinched from his breath, “I know you so fucking well, Will. So, drink. it. all.”

Fear and panic took Will and he downed the liquor in a single swig. Mason let go of his hair and patted him on the back as Will coughed at the heat of the drink. Mason stood moving back to the bar, taking Will's glass with him.

“We know each other so well. Or at least I thought we did.” Mason said darkly, “Let's test it out. I know your drink of choice, now you tell me mine.”

“Gin martini. Clean,” Will answered as Mason poured the gin into the tall stemmed glass.

“Almost clean,” Mason corrected. He turned leaving his drink and walked back to Will. He grabbed Will's face and forced him to look up, “I am a man of taste. Come on, baby, what do I take my martinis with?”

"T-tears," Will whispered because there was no way to escape. There was no getting away from Mason. He was going back to this nightmare.

"Where's my tears, Will?"

Will let out a choked gasp and several tears ran down his face like a pavlovian response. Mason grinned and collected the small droplets. He walked back to the bar and dropped them into the glass. He sipped the drink, and then with a big sigh and a smack of his lips, "Now that's what I call a martini!"

Will wiped his face quickly with his hand. Drying up whatever remained. He couldn't be this vulnerable.

"You know, this martini is so fucking good," Mason spoke obnoxiously, "I think I'm gonna make more. In fact, I think I want them all night. Can you handle that, babe?"

Will balled his fists, trying to stay calm, "Mason, I want to leave."

"Too bad, so sad. You're gonna make me lots of martini's tonight."

Will shuddered. He opened his mouth to speak, but couldn't find any words. He felt suffocated. Mason sauntered over, his eyes cold with malice, until he stood directly in front of him. His hand gripped the back of Will's head, fingers coiling tightly around Will's strains of hair. Mason forced him to look up, pulling his hair like a lead.

Mason's lips dipped into a pout, "Slept like an angel. So fucking peaceful. But now the princess has an attitude problem? I don't think so. Princess needs to wake-up."

"Please, Mason, what do you want?" Will whispered, his voice quivering.

Mason laughed, "I want you to cry all night you stupid fucking bitch."

Will flinched at the words because they were true. He was a stupid fucking bitch.

Mason's other hand wrapped around his neck, "I came to bring you home—" he squeezed and Will choked, but Will couldn't move away, couldn't fight. "--Don't you want to go home?"

Will could only blink his answer. He wanted to go home— back to Hannibal. Back to safety. He didn't want to go back to Louisiana, where every other night he was passed out unconscious from drink or or whatever the hell Mason gave him. Mason had said it made him sweeter, Will knew it just took his facilities away. Made him easy for whatever Mason wanted to do with him.

"How did I get here?" Will wheezed, trying to be forceful even though Mason had him round the throat.

The older man chuckled and released his neck, "Sent Cordell to pick you up."

Will paled, he hated Cordell. He feared what he could not remember. Had he been drugged? Drugged and alone with Cordell was terrifying. Will couldn't dwell on it because Mason

jerked his hair and Will once again looked up at the towering man.

"Cordell tells me you're living in a car," Mason sneered, "Can't do anything on your own."

Will flushed, his eyes darting away. Mason always made fun of his plight. Using it to scare Will from leaving.

You'd be homeless without me.

Don't you like living with me?

Sleep in the streets or sleep with me, it's an easy decision.

For many years Will had taken his offer, until it became too much. Until the white hot fire burnt some sense into him. He had to get away from Mason. He glared up at his tormentor and summoned his courage, "Fuck you, Mason."

Mason laughed. "Has your little stunt really made you that stupid?"

"Fuck you—" Mason stuck him across the face. If Mason hadn't had his hair gripped so tightly, Will probably would have fallen off the couch. A few tears brimmed in his eyes, his face felt like fire.

Mason hissed, "You wanna say that again?"

"Mason please—"

Mason punched him in the side of the head. Will blanked for a moment. He blink away the spots, trying to convince his body to move.

"I said, do you want to say that again?"

"No, sir," Will gasped in pain. *Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. Don't antagonize him! Stupid idiot!*

"You really think living in your car is better than what we had?! Do I need to remind you? You belong to me!"

Will bit his lip, trying to hold back tears. He was dizzy and his head flared with pain. He said very softly, "I know."

"Then why the hell did you leave!" Mason snarled.

Will shrunk, cowering, "I don't know."

Mason hit him again, and Will let out a broken sob, "I'm sorry, Mason. I— I'm sorry."

Mason grunted and let go of his hair. Will slumped forward, hugging his body for security.

"You know, I really thought you were smarter than this. Especially after last time. I thought we covered this. You are mine."

"I-I'm really sorry, Mason!" Will cried. *I'm so fucking stupid. I never should have run.*

"You thought you'd go to college? News flash, you aren't smart enough for college. You'd crumple— just like you are now!"

"I'm not— I mean— I—," Will stuttered. But he was crumbling. Just like Mason said. *Wasn't he?*

"You look like shit— are you even going to the classes?"

"Y-yes— I mean I try—"

"You're probably whoring yourself and partying every night! Is that what this is? Did I not fuck you enough? Or you didn't like my parties?"

"No— Mason, it's not like that."

"I doubt you're even enrolled in that fucking school— you're just fucking around with college guys."

"They gave me a scholarship—"

"For being poor and a slut? Yeah, that's the only thing you have going for you."

"It's academic! I'm not doing anything wrong," Will sobbed.

Mason just scoffed, "You stole your dad's car. You think that's not wrong?"

"I didn't—"

"He could report it. You could get arrested."

Will gapped, "But I didn't—"

"You did. If you get caught, it's an automatic 3 years."

"But I didn't steal it!" His words felt hollow in his mouth though.

"Yes. You did. You took it without telling him— and from the looks of it you busted it real bad!"

Will shook his head frantically, even though it hurt terribly, "No, Mason you don't understand."

"You stole the car and broke the window, now there's water damage inside, what am I not understanding?" Mason tisked and shook his head, "I should turn you in, might actually teach you something."

"No, Mason, please," Will begged. Everything that Mason was saying was making terrifying sense in his rattled brain. He was stupid. He had taken his dad's car without asking. He was a

thief. Now he was likely to go to prison because he was a fucking stupid criminal. He had kissed Hannibal— and liked it. God, he was such a fucking slut.

“I need to teach you a fucking lesson.”

"I'm really sorry, Mason," Will whimpered pathetically. He wanted to fall over, his head was reeling so bad, but he tried to look up at the man. There were two Mason's in his vision. They both smiled at him creepily and Will blinked until they shared the same face— though had four bodies. Eight glasses of martini's raised and sipped from a single huge grinning mouth.

“Mason?” Will whispered fearfully. Nothing was right. His body which had felt heavy and dizzy before, now seemed to spin and his vision seemed to come from above him. Like he was floating. He swallowed thickly, his addled mind finally putting the pieces together: He was drugged.

He looked down at his arm, just a smear of blood from the needle. He knew logically this was very bad and he needed to run, but he couldn't convince his body to do anything about it. Whatever Mason had given him was strong. Will didn't know how much Mason had administered, but from the way the colors in the room began to swirl, he guessed a large dosage.

"What d—did—?" Will tried to form words, but he was quickly losing his facilities.

Mason sneered above him, "Needed some of your old medicine."

"Mason— N—no, please," Will managed, the lights in the room were moving and Mason's face was distorted cruelly.

“You need to wake up princess. Your fucking stunt is over.”

Mason hit him. Will registered the pain after, it was like a numbing ache— not the normal sudden flare. Mason was saying something in that terrible brisk and domineering voice. Will shivered and tried to shrink, but ended up collapsing on his side, the couch cushions freezing cold to his hot and sticky skin.

Will felt his body roll over. He felt Mason over him. Mason was pulling his shirt up now— he tried to clear his mind. He needed to do something, but he was plastered to the couch and dark spots were everywhere. The spots swarmed and turned into bugs. Giant beetles with sharp pinchers, nasty hairy ants, millipedes with a thousand legs that scurried and crawled. They were all coming for him: crawling up the couch. He tried to scream but he couldn't. He couldn't even move. They were crawling everywhere. He tried to shove them off. He pulled and ripped at his clothes. But he couldn't fight them. He couldn't defend himself. They went into his mouth, they crawled up his nostrils, they swam in his eyes. Everywhere they were biting him.

He suddenly came to his senses.

It wasn't bugs. It was Mason. He was moving over him. He was gripping his hips, his shoulders. Will tried to scramble away, but he couldn't move. Then Mason was forcing

himself inside. Hitting him when he tried to move. Will squeezed his eyes shut, Mason was more horrible than the insects. He wished he was being bitten by beetles or flies. They'd be better.

His thoughts became reality in his drug addled mind floated once more above the gruesome scene. He watched in horror as Mason's face transformed. Long curved black fangs grew from the man's mouth. His eyes became huge and black. Will tried to scream as the giant insect pinchers bit his shoulder in a savage kiss. Mason's hands blackened and thinned, until his arms were long black beetle legs, stabbing into his shoulders and side. Mason had become a huge beetle fucking him in the strange swirls of Will's mind.

Will shuddered and screamed. Or tried to scream. He didn't know if he was successful. He didn't really know anything in that moment except everything was frightening and everything hurt.

*

Waking up hurt. He supposed that was the whole point. He had been living in a dream and Mason had made sure he knew it. Made sure he woke up.

His eyes ached to open their lids. His sides felt like they had been battered on the inside. His neck was cramped where it was twisted on the cushions. His head pounded. His legs felt sore. His bare skin was plastered to the leather couch. He was naked. He tried to raise himself and stopped immediately.

There were tears inside. He could feel them shooting pain whenever he moved. Mason had been brutal. It was a punishment and as usual, Will was left to try and survive past it. He reached behind himself, trying to feel how bad it was. There was blood and cum coating the insides of his thighs. He drew his hand away in disgust.

He lay in a heap on the disgusting couch, breathing in the plastic of the faux leather of the cushions. The blood and cum would easily wipe off. Must be why Mason had them. *Easy to clean up after the whore.*

Will felt tears sliding down his face. He choked down a sob. *Why did this have to happen? Why him?*

Will allowed himself a moment of pity before gritting his teeth and pulling himself up. He breathed through the pain, holding himself as still as possible once he was upright. He immediately spotted the injection site on the inside of his upper arm. It matched the other track marks he had collected over the years. He had been good these past few months. He hadn't used, but now it was ruined. He had to look away, disgusted at himself and on the verge of screaming.

He looked around his surroundings. The living room was dark for the most part, the only light shone in from the glass patio wall. It was night time, but the garden had a bright path that shone light inside.

Mason was nowhere to be seen, but Will heard laughter somewhere deeper in the house. Mason was always at the center of the party. Once he had accomplished punishing his wayward whore, there was nothing stopping him from continuing the party. Will had been checked off his to-do list. For now at least. Mason would be back: he had told Will he wanted martini's all night after all. Will shuddered and wiped his tears away quickly.

He spotted his clothes scattered on the floor. He carefully reached for each piece. At a snail's pace, he clothed himself, his shirt and hoodie easy. His pants were excruciating. It hurt like hell, but once he was dressed he felt more like himself. He breathed a sigh of relief. He spotted something else on the ground. It must have fallen from his pocket: the phone Hannibal had given him. He reached for it, biting back his cries of pain. He grasped it pulling it near. It was off, and for a cold moment Will was certain it was broken, but he tried the power button.

It turned on. He let out a sigh of relief as the screen glowed to life.

He must have had over 50 missed calls from Hannibal. Beverly too. Will unlocked the phone. He had to call Hannibal. He needed to get out of there before Mason came back. He glanced around the dark room, Mason's laughter still carrying on somewhere down the hall.

Will was safe for the moment.

He dialed Hannibal.

Hannibal picked up on the first ring, "Where are you, Will?"

He sounded a little desperate, but not upset. Not scared. It gave Will enough confidence to whisper, "Mason's."

"I'm outside his villa. Where are you?"

Somehow that did not surprise Will. Hannibal was ingenious, he would figure out where Will was. Will wet his lips, still speaking barely above a whisper. "Inside. It's dark. A living room. I can see outside. A garden with a path."

"Can you get outside?"

Will bit his lip trying to keep from sobbing but a choked gasp came out.

"Will? Are you hurt?" Hannibal's concern flooded the speakers.

Will calmed his shuddering. He breathed deeply trying to sound calm, "I— I don't think I can move..."

There was a pause, then, "I'll be right there, Mylimasis."

Will clutched the phone, "Please don't leave me here."

"Never, my love."

Will listened to Hannibal's breathing on the phone and his rustling steps. There was a deep comfort in hearing those sounds. Listening to them, Will faded, just imagining Hannibal rushing to find him.

There was a soft knock and Will jerked his head. Hannibal was on the patio, just a glass door between them. Hannibal slid the door open and hurried to Will. Will watched as Hannibal surveyed the scene. His critical eye seeing everything— seeing too much. Will looked down ashamed.

But Hannibal knelt down in front of him. His hands clutching Will's, "Mylimasis."

Will's vision flooded with tears and he couldn't speak. Hannibal spoke for him, "Let's get you out of here."

Will could only nod. Hannibal carefully moved an arm below Will's legs, then around Will's back. He lifted slowly and gently, but still Will yelped in pain. He buried his head in Hannibal's shoulder and clutched at the man's clothes. He let himself relax in Hannibal's arms. Now that he was there, Will would be safe. He let his head fall listless against Hannibal's shoulder and his mind receded inside somewhere safe.

*

Now that he had Will, Hannibal didn't move slowly. He walked quickly back the way he came. Out the door, to the cold garden air. Hannibal cut off the garden path, staying in the shadows to avoid the guards' eyes. He knew the villa was littered with them. He arrived at the outskirts of the property. There was a wall. Hannibal had climbed it when he came in, but Will wouldn't be able to manage it. Even though his car was just on the other side, he'd have to detour.

He walked the edge of the wall until he came to the back entrance of the estate. There was no gate, just a road and a small guard house. Hannibal whispered to Will, who had been groaning and whimpering in his arms, "My love, I'm going to run, you might be jostled, but you must stay quiet. Can you do that?"

Will didn't respond, but his grip on Hannibal seemed to tighten.

Hannibal darted quickly around the wall, only stepping on the lit road for a moment. Hannibal moved quickly, his grip on Will like iron. He would not let go of his precious cargo. The guard didn't react and Hannibal breathed a sigh of relief. He settled on a steady pace and made it back to his car quickly.

He laid Will in the backseat. His mongoose winced in pain and ended up settling on his side. Hannibal covered him with a blanket. He had to get him to a hospital.

There were shouts from the house and lights were thrown on. Hannibal snarled in retaliation. They were dead. He'd crush their bodies and grind their bones to dust. They'd be nothing by the time Hannibal was finished with them. They were all dead.

He climbed in the car and slammed the door closed. He would be back, but for now he had to care for Will.

Chapter End Notes

Hey folks,

This chapter is where I left off last time. I have more written (nearly finished), however I'm still debating and editing... so... Updates may not be weekly anymore. I will ATTEMPT to post them weekly. Please have patience with me. We all want Will saved and safe and loved but the good bits are always getting to that point. The tag should say Hurt/EVENTUAL comfort...

Hope to see you all back next week. Many thanks for all the comments and kudos,

-Apple

Drifting

They took him from Hannibal when they arrived at the hospital.

Hannibal had carried the younger man into the building, Will had passed out sometime while driving and only mumbled incoherently. The nurses took one look at his bruised face, hanging limp and dazed, and rushed for a gurney. Hannibal gently placed his precious cargo down and lovingly brushed Will's hair from his face before the patient was rushed away.

Hannibal waited in the hospital's waiting room, his body cramped in the uncomfortable plastic chair. He saw the police arrive and recognized the officer as officer Crawford. He had a feeling he was here for Will. Hannibal stood, raising his hand in greeting, but Crawford strictly ignored him. Hannibal frowned as the officer disappeared into the back without a word to him. He began to pace nervously in the waiting room, it had been over an hour, this was taking too long. Was Will ok?

A mousy looking nurse appeared at the door, "Is there a Hannibal here?"

Hannibal immediately strode over to her, "I'm Hannibal Lecter, is Will alright?"

"Eh," She nervously shifted, "You should come back to the room."

He nodded curtly and followed her back as his anxiety for Will skyrocketed. He heard Will before he saw him.

"GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!"

"Mr. Graham, please—"

"WHERE THE HELL IS HANNIBAL?"

"We called for him, please calm down."

"GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME!"

Hannibal jogged towards the voices, brushing past the nurse. He rounded the doorway, calling out, "Will, I'm here!"

Will was kneeling at the top of the bed, his position defensive as he screamed at the people in the room. His eyes were wild and bloodshot. He looked like he had been dunked into a pool, his body was soaked with sweat and his hair was plastered to his face. To Hannibal's horror, he looked worse off than when he arrived.

Will's whole body sagged with relief as he saw him, "Hannibal."

Hannibal strode to Will's side, Will threw himself at him, hugging him tightly. Hannibal held him against his chest, running his hand gently over his wet curls, "Shh, Mylimasis. It's

alright.” Hannibal frowned at the audience of doctors, nurses, and the officer, Crawford, who were standing in the room, “What’s going on here?”

Will answered for the group, pointing an accusative finger at them, “They’re tryin’ FUCKIN’ touch me!”

Hannibal massaged his mongoose’s rigid neck, “Shh, darling. They won’t hurt you.”

“LIARS! They said I had to wait to see you!” Will spat.

Will was obviously terrified, and taking every ounce of it on the workers. Hannibal hummed trying to bring Will down from his heightened space, “They wanted to make sure you were alright.”

“They were TOUCHING me, Hannibal! Fuck them! I hate them—” Will snarled and gestured frantically at the group. He screamed, “I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!”

Hannibal pulled him back in gently, “Will— Will!”

Will threw a blanket in anger at the group. It only flopped on the ground, but it was done with enough intentionality that had Officer Crawford stepping forward, “Mr. Graham—”

“FUCK YOU!” Will yelled at the officer.

Hannibal pulled Will back, more firmly than before. He did not want Will threatening the police. That never led to anything productive, “Will, stop it.”

Will glared at him, “They’re gonna fuckin’ try somethin’.”

“No, they are not,” Hannibal countered

“But they are!” Will was scared and desperate, his whole body was quivering with anxious energy.

Hannibal cupped Will’s face, making Will focus on just him, “I won’t let them.” Will bit his lip. His eyes darted towards the others, but Hannibal made him hold his gaze. “You’re safe now, Will. I won’t let anything happen.”

Will finally grunted unhappily, “Make them leave.”

“Ok, Mylimasis,” Hannibal agreed with relief. He looked up, some of the nurses and doctors had already left. He gave a pointed look at Crawford and the rest, “Can you give us a moment please?”

Crawford and the doctors understood and left, but by the way they frowned, Hannibal guessed he had only bought Will a few minutes before they came back for their unruly patient.

Will collapsed into him, holding him tightly around the waist. Hannibal sat beside him on the hospital bed and ran soothing hands down Will’s back.

“There, Will, you’re safe. I’ve got you.”

“I fucking hate them,” Will cried.

“I know darling,” Hannibal cooed softly, trying to calm Will down.

“I don’t want them to touch me. I don’t want them to look at me! Why did you bring me here?”

“You’re hurt, Mylimasis. You need medical attention. They can help you,”

“You have a first aid kit at home,” Will whined pitifully.

“Will, you need their help. They need to check you for injuries.”

“You can check me– I don’t want them to.” Will said obstinately.

“They can run tests that I cannot.” Hannibal didn’t want to scare Will, but his mongoose needed attention. He knew Mason had raped Will, he could smell it when he went into that cursed house. Even now he could smell it faintly on Will. The blood and semen hidden beneath the hospital gown. Will’s salty sweat now covered the scent, but still it lingered. And something else: the way Will shook and his eyes wandered, had his mongoose been drugged?

“They took my blood already. Woke when they were doing it,” Will mumbled against Hannibal’s stomach where he clung to him. Hannibal gently pulled Will’s hospital sleeve up, seeing the white cotton bandage of the blood draw. His eyes lingered on the elbow crease. There was discoloration, purple bruises and the older scare marks of frequent needle use. His darling was probably high as a kite at the moment and likely had been many times before in Mason’s presence. He lowered the sleeve before Will could notice.

“You were unconscious when you arrived, Mylimasis. They were trying to help you. They will be able to test for diseases and give you treatment now.”

Will flinched, “You think I’m diseased. You think I’m fucking sick.”

Hannibal hauled him up from where he clung to his waist. He pulled Will against his chest wrapping his arms around the slight body, “No, Will. You are not diseased.”

Will shuddered, “What if I am?”

“You are not, and even if a test showed something, you are still my boyfriend and I still love you.”

Will stilled in his arms.

“Love me?” Will looked up, his eyes wide.

He was so childlike in that moment Hannibal couldn’t help smile adoringly at him, “Yes, Will. I love you.”

A few emotions passed over Will. Disbelief, confusion, awe, and then his brow furrowed. Will shook his head, "You don't want to love me, Hannibal. I don't deserve it."

Hannibal kissed his forehead gently, "I don't deserve *you*, my love. I'm the luckiest person alive to have you."

Will blushed and he shook his head, burying his face again in Hannibal's chest. "You're stupid," He mumbled with no venom.

Hannibal smiled, "I love you, Will. Nothing will change that."

Will grunted but said nothing, preferring to stay hidden then to argue. Hannibal knew Will would argue the daylights out of why Hannibal shouldn't love him, but Hannibal wouldn't listen.

The doctor and officer Crawford wearily re-entered the room. Will tensed, sensing the people, but didn't move or look up.

"Can you give us a few more minutes," Hannibal asked, trying to shield Will protectively.

"We need to ask Mr. Graham some questions," The doctor said.

Hannibal looked down at Will, he carefully touched the young man's knotted and sweaty hair. "Darling, can you answer some questions for the doctor?"

Will's grip tightened, "Don't leave."

"I won't," Hannibal promised, "Why don't you sit up for them?"

Will grunted unhappily, and shifted until he was upright. He glared at the guests then slumped back into Hannibal's chest, though he faced the intruders with what Hannibal guessed was a ferocious scowl.

"Mr. Graham," The doctor cleared her throat, "Are you sure you would like Mr. Lecter here with you?"

"Yes! He's my boyfriend." Will snapped, tugging at Hannibal's arms, Hannibal obliged, wrapping him in a tight embrace.

"Alright," the doctor pacified, "Just wanted to be sure. Now, Will can you tell us a little bit about what happened?"

"No," Will said staunchly. Hannibal raised an eyebrow, he had not expected this.

"Mr. Graham— eh—," the doctor stuttered, "Your wounds are— You need to let us know what happened."

"No. I don't."

"Will—" Hannibal tried.

Will's nails dug into his skin, a clear warning. "I don't remember anything."

Hannibal swallowed back his words. Will was refusing to share. Was his mongoose too scared to tell the doctors or did he have other reasons he refused?. If they ran a rape kit, they could probably send Mason to prison— at least for a little while. If they didn't, the man could continue terrorizing Will. Hannibal held his tongue, letting Will make the decisions.

"Mr. Graham, it's important that you share all the details of what happened. You are seriously injured."

"I'm fine. I want to be released."

The doctor sighed, "You've suffered multiple blows to the head and have a concussion. There's signs of sexual abuse, and your blood work shows high levels of various psychotics. You'll need to stay until morning at least for those to filter through your system."

"Can't I go now?" Will asked.

The doctor ignored his question, "Do you have a prescription for any psychotic drugs?"

Will frowned, "No."

"Do you realize the drugs in your system are illegal substances?"

"How am I supposed to know what's in my system?" Will shot back.

The doctor sighed, "Have you ever taken illegal substances before?"

Will glanced nervously at the cop then back at the doctor, he lied "No."

The doctor looked sorely unconvinced. Hannibal had an inkling the doctor had spotted the marks on Will's arms as well.

"Were you given those drugs?"

"I don't remember."

"Were you coerced?"

"I said, I don't remember!"

The doctor huffed in frustration. Crawford raised a hand, "Will, we just want to catch whoever did this to you. Any information you have is helpful."

"Well I don't have any," Will snapped.

Crawford did not back down, "Does this have anything to do with your relationship with Mason Verger?"

Will tensed and fingers dug into Hannibal's skin. He didn't say anything.

“Will? You can tell us what happened,” Crawford stepped closer, as if sensing Will’s hesitation, “If Mason Verger is responsible for this, we will arrest him. He’ll be put in prison.”

“N-no,” Will answered, his small body trembling in Hannibal’s arms.

Crawford stepped closer, “Will, don’t cover this up. You would be helping others who have been hurt by Verger. I looked at his file– he’s a criminal. Help us put him away.”

Will stilled in Hannibal’s arms. The young man looked up at the earnest cop, his face serious and determined. He grasped Hannibal’s hand tightly in assurance.

“I don’t remember what happened.”

*

Much to everyone’s chagrin, Will remained staunch in his story: He remembered nothing and he wanted to go home. He clarified that he suspected he had been attacked at his car, the last place he remembered being and blamed his attacker for the injuries and especially the illegal drugs. He refused to have the doctor’s look at him and only allowed for a second blood sample to ensure the toxins were gone. His first sample had come back clean of any STDs which made Hannibal breathe a little easier, it also made the doctors ease up slightly. Crawford and the doctor had tried to get Hannibal to admit some detail of the event, but he refused. Will did not want anyone to know, and he wouldn’t break that trust. He told them he found Will near his car when searching for the man. He specifically described the area without cameras. No need for the police to easily disprove their story

After the night in the hospital, Will was finally released. The hospital staff were glad to see them go, Will was anything but a good patient. He had refused to sleep, refused pain medicine, refused to let anyone see his wounds. He shouted if anyone got near except for Hannibal. He had also refused to talk to Hannibal, shying away or pretending not to hear. It had been a long night.

Hannibal was relieved to get him out of the hospital. Will limped to the car, wincing in pain with each step. Hannibal helped him into the passenger side and then climbed into the driver’s seat. He drove very slowly home, minding the road carefully for any jolts. They arrive home about thirty minutes later, Will still sullen in the passenger seat.

Hannibal parked. He sat still in his seat. He wasn’t quite sure what to do next. Will was safe, but not in any sort of way ok.

“I’m sorry,” Will said stiffly. He shifted nervously.

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for,” Hannibal soothed.

Will rolled his eyes, “I kinda lied to the cops, and made you lie too.”

“So you do remember something,” Hannibal said soberly.

Will looked out the car window, avoiding his eyes, “Too much.”

Hannibal nodded. This was a lot for a car conversation, especially with Will’s injuries. Hannibal decided to move them inside, “You should lay down and sleep.”

“I’m not tired,” Will snapped.

“My love, you are exhausted. You need rest.”

“I need a shower,” Will countered.

“Fine, a shower, then you rest,” Hannibal got out and came around to the other side. Will already had his door open and was working on getting out. Hannibal knelt, placing a hand on Will's knee, "Will, let me carry you, just up the stairs so you don't strain yourself."

Will frowned, "I can do it myself."

"I know, my love, but it will be painful. Let me help you."

Will bit his lip and looked away, "Fine, just up the stairs."

Rigid, Hannibal drew Will out. He quickly entered the house and up the stairs. He didn't put Will down until they stood in Will's bathroom. Will found his footing with a groan, "Fuck, that wasn't just the stairs."

Hannibal leaned in and kissed Will's cheek, "I'm sorry."

Will ignored him going to the shower, "I don't need your pity."

"You don't. But could you use my help?" Hannibal said carefully.

Will paused, his shoulders near his ears, his back towards Hannibal. "You really don't want to help me."

Hannibal stepped closer, his hand sliding into Will's. He leaned in once more and kissed the back of Will's neck. It was salty from sweat. Hannibal spoke softly, "I do, Will."

Will shook his head and stepped away, speaking briskly, "I'm hungry. Can you make me something?"

Hannibal narrowed his eyes, seeing Will's diversion, "No."

Will looked up, surprised to say the least, he glared and muttered, "Just leave then."

"Will, I'm not leaving." Hannibal said firmly.

"Well, I don't want you here," Will snapped.

"I'm not leaving."

Will's eyes widened as Hannibal stood his ground. "But I— you— you can't."

"I'm staying with you darling."

"I'm taking a shower, Hannibal," Will pointed to the door, "Get out."

Hannibal leaned against the bathroom counter, "I said I wouldn't leave you and—"

"It's a fucking shower, Hannibal!" Will interrupted.

"And you need someone to look after your injuries." Hannibal finished with a sigh. His mongoose was frightened and hurt and it broke his heart. Will was fighting so hard.

Will looked away, "I'm fine. The doctors looked at me."

Hannibal shook his head, "You didn't let them touch you. Remember? I'm surprised they were even able to draw your blood."

Will pursed his lips, "I don't know why you care so much."

Hannibal went to him then, cupping his bruised face, "You're in pain and it pains me."

Will stared at Hannibal, his empathy reading Hannibal like a book. Will bit his lip, a nervous habit for the young man, "Fucking hell Hannibal. You can't say that."

"It's true though."

Will's eyes softened, "Pretentious ass."

"I know."

"Don't say anything?" Will asked. His fragile eyes, searching for trust in Hannibal's.

"Whatever you need," Hannibal agreed.

Will nodded and pushed himself into Hannibal's chest. The older man held him close, trying to calm the furious beat of Will's heart. Hannibal kissed the top of Will's head, "We'll go slow my love."

Will stayed in his arms for a while. Hannibal let him gather himself. He would not rush Will. He wanted him to feel safe. His mongoose was already so brave.

"Hannibal," Will said, still tucked under Hannibal's chin.

"Yes, Mylimasis?" Hannibal replied softly, He could feel Will's nervous fingers clasping and unclasping Hannibal's shirt.

"I'm scared to show you. Terrified actually," Will admitted, "I've never told anyone. Shown anyone. I just hid it. I guess I thought it would be too real if I told anyone. If I was the only one who knew, I could manage it. But— but—"

Will took a deep breath and looked up at Hannibal, demanding trust, "I don't want you to think differently of me. I'm still just the guy you helped in the locker room. The guy you taught how to use fucking chopsticks. I don't want to be something different in your mind because of this. I'm just Will. I'm not victim-Will. I'm not hurt-Will. I'm just Will."

There were tears in Will's eyes.

"I'm honored you've let me see you. Every new layer of your existence is a gift. You let me know you— deeply and intimately. I wouldn't dare see you as something you are not."

The tears were running down Will's face now. Hannibal held his face and kissed Will with all the gentle and quiet love he could muster.

Will sniffled and wiped his nose with the back of his hand, "You're being sentimental."

"Yes," Hannibal murmured, smiling lovingly at his mongoose, who had a pretty blush beneath his bruises, "I'm quite sentimental around you."

Will snorted and shook his head, but there was a small smile on his lips. He moved back, wiping his face again, trying to bury his vulnerability. "Uh, how should we do this?"

Hannibal placed a hand on his shoulder, "We go slowly. I'll look you over in the shower as you wash, alright?"

Will nodded stiffly. His fingers played with the hem of his shirt, "Could you – could you look away?"

Hannibal stepped back, giving him space. He turned away, "Whenever you're ready."

"I don't think I'll ever be ready," Will mumbled, but Hannibal could hear him undressing. The hospital clothes dropping to the floor. Hannibal would burn them, he'd burn the other bundle of clothes still sitting in the car. He didn't want Will to see them again. He listened as the gentle water started and Will stepped in with a grunt.

"I'm going to turn around, Mylimasis," Hannibal said loudly. When Will didn't object, he did. He could see Will's thin and naked frame through the blurred glass, holding himself tightly and shivering under the water's spray. He slid open the shower door and stepped inside. He was fully clothed sans his shoes. He would happily get his clothes soaked so he didn't scare Will.

Will was staring blankly at the floor, watching the water drain, but his eyes glinted upward as Hannibal entered. He unintentionally stepped backwards away from Hannibal, looking scared and ready to run. Hannibal raised his hands, "We are taking it easy. Do you want me to get some soap ready for you?"

Will shifted uneasily, and Hannibal tried to keep his gaze strictly on Will's face or the tiled wall. Will shrunk backwards more, but nodded, "Yeah, thanks."

Hannibal wet a washcloth and lathered it with soap. He held it out to Will, "Can I take a look?" Will nodded, taking the cloth. His hands fidgeted with the warm rag.

Hannibal surveyed Will. Will was too thin for his liking. He worried over the old fading bruises littering his skin and the old cuts from what must have been a pocket knife. He was glad to see that the only new bruises laid mainly on Will's face. "Did he hit you anywhere else Will?"

Will shook his head, "No. At least not that I can remember."

Hannibal's eyes drifted lower, he could see fingerprint bruises down Will's arms, on his legs, his belly. Scratches from vicious nails followed, red and harsh the pale skin. Hannibal wanted to rip the man's fingers out one by one. There were older bruises too, cuts half healed, red with new skin recently heal over. Older, white lined scars, on his sides and belly, as if the monster had decided Will was his pin cushion for a knife.

"I told him to fuck off."

Hannibal's eyes flickered back to Will's.

Will blinked, "That's why he hit me. I think... I think he also just wanted to hit something."

"You were brave to tell him."

"I was stupid," Will grunted.

"There's a fine line between bravery and stupidity. I've only seen you be brave."

"You've never seen me around Mason."

Hannibal sobered. He hadn't. And if he hadn't stupidly spoken out the days before, Will never would have run. Never would have been caught. He was responsible for Will and he failed.

"I'm sorry, Will." Will stared but didn't say anything. He looked so small standing there. Hannibal wanted to bundle him up safely, but he could see the dried blood still staining Will's thighs. He cleared his throat, "I want to make sure you're not bleeding."

Will stepped back again, his back now pressed against the shower wall, "Do you have to?"

"Please Will?" Hannibal begged.

Will sighed looking away, but he tentatively stepped forward. An invitation. Hannibal took it, approaching Will like he was a startled animal. He cupped his mongoose's face, "Thank you, Will." Will sniffled and Hannibal knew there were tears. He kissed Will on the cheek, "We'll do this quickly."

Hannibal slowly turned Will around, his hands gently rubbing up and down on Will's arms. He meant to do it quickly. To inspect and clean the remaining evidence. But as his eyes landed on Will's back, he froze. The old faded scars continued, but a new wound appeared. On Will's lower back, the skin was raised, Red and white as if on fire. The flesh was burnt in a circle.

A brand.

“What is this?” Hannibal whispered, his eyes tracing the raised flesh. It was a crest, a seal. The name Verger was distinctly burnt on the skin.

“It’s Mason’s,” Will said softly, “When I turned eighteen, I tried to run. He wanted to make sure I didn’t leave again.” Hannibal was at a loss for words. He was filled with anger at the brand. At Mason. At Will’s quiet suffering.

“Please,” Will asked, “It doesn’t hurt now, just ignore it.”

Hannibal shook himself from his stupor. He should not be surprised by this. The brand was just another method of torture Mason used. Another injury on his mongoose. The brand, though terrible, was just another mark Mason had left. Just like the bruises, the scrapes, the concussions, the fear that Will was currently suffering from. The brand could be dealt with later.

He quickly knelt and examined Will, he wasn’t bleeding, and there wasn’t much blood anyway, which Hannibal said thanks for. He cleaned Will carefully, not leaving anything to be found later. When he finished, he stood and turned Will around in his arms and hugged him hard. Will let him, but he didn’t reciprocate the hug. Hannibal could feel him crying softly. He held him close, letting the water drown out Will’s sobs.

He needed to clean Will and get him warm and comfortable, so Hannibal washed Will's hair and body. Will stood as a statue. His gaze was distant and Hannibal knew his mind was a million miles away. Hannibal guided him out of the shower when they had finished. He wrapped a towel around Will’s waist, another around his shoulders. Will’s hands grasped the edges and pulled them close.

“Why don’t you lay down while I get your clothes?”

Will nodded and allowed Hannibal to guide him out of the bathroom. He winced as he sat on the bed. Hannibal quickly grabbed Will’s clothes and knelt once more beside Will and helped him pull the clothes up his legs. He stood and did the same with the sleep shirt. Will was clean and dressed, and now sitting in bed, but his eyes were still vacant.

“My love,” Hannibal called gently, touching Will’s face, “Why don’t you lay down? I’ll get you some more pain medicine, then you can rest.”

“Will you stay with me?” Will asked.

“Yes, darling, once you take the medicine I can stay with you,” Hannibal agreed.

“I don’t think I can sleep by myself,” Will whispered.

“You won’t have to.”

“I—I— Can you hold me? Just until I go to sleep?”

“Anything you need, Mylimasis,” Hannibal promised.

Will seemed satisfied with that answer and allowed Hannibal to help him lay on the bed and tuck the blankets around him. Hannibal left for the medicine and also stripped his wet clothes and slipped into dry ones. He brought back to Will a glass of water and the pills. Will was sitting up in bed, clutching the comforter in a death grip. Hannibal immediately worried, “Will?”

Will’s eyes were wide, but his body relaxed when he saw Hannibal, “I—I– You were gone. I panicked. You were gone.”

“I’m sorry, Mylimasis,” Hannibal sat beside, “I’m here.”

Hannibal made him drink the water and take the medicine. Will did so mutely and without hesitation, but he gripped Hannibal’s shirt like a lifeline. Hannibal only managed to get Will to lay down again when he was under the covers beside him. Will buried his face into Hannibal’s chest, while his slight but strong arms gripped Hannibal. Almost entirely on top of Hannibal, Will finally seemed to relax. He had trapped Hannibal beneath him. Ensuring his mind Hannibal couldn’t leave. Hannibal wrapped his arms around Will, pressing him close. His embrace saying he wouldn’t ever leave.

In skies of blue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will was jerked awake when he felt Hannibal move. He panicked and clawed at Hannibal's arms trying to keep the man from leaving. He could not leave him. He was the one barrier protecting him from the sheer unknown. Hannibal stopped moving, "Will?"

"Where are you going?" Will choked desperately. His senses screamed that he needed Hannibal to stay with him.

"You fell asleep. I wanted to give you space," Hannibal said almost apologetically.

"I don't need space," Will snapped.

"Mylimasis," Hannibal said calmly and settled back down on the bed, "I won't leave you, if that's what you want, darling."

"Then stop trying," Will replied angrily, his hands clenched at Hannibal's shoulders.

"I'm sorry," Hannibal soothed, his arms wrapped around Will once more and pulled him close. Will went without struggle, settling atop Hannibal's chest. He pressed his lips to Hannibal's collar, a chaste kiss to say he was sorry for needing this. For being so weak. He felt like crying again, but he didn't want to cry anymore. Not in front of the other student. Hannibal had already seen too much anyways.

"Will?"

Will looked towards Hannibal, he couldn't see, the room was dark but he could feel Hannibal's presence everywhere. Warm and safe. He could feel his eyes on him too, dark as it was.

"Yeah?" He whispered back, sounding foolish with childlike eagerness.

Hannibal turned his face, they were inches from each other, Hannibal's breath ghosting Will's lips, "I won't leave, Mylimasis, but promise you won't run away again."

Will swallowed. His fears bubbling up again. The differences between Mason and Hannibal were stark, but at times Hannibal would say something like that and all his senses would flare with danger. But he calmed himself.

This was Hannibal. Stupid but sweet Hannibal.

He followed the warm breath until he found his prize. He kissed Hannibal gently, hoping to soften his next words, "I can't promise that."

Hannibal was quiet, pondering. Will almost opened his mouth to somehow try and explain, but Hannibal spoke first.

"And you shouldn't."

Hannibal's fingers massaged Will's sore neck. Soothing the ache and the stress, "I value my freedom above almost all things. It wouldn't be right to ask you to give your freedom away. You may run as far away as you wish. I won't try and hold you back."

"Hannibal—" Will choked, wanting to kiss and hit the man at the same time for knowing him so well. For seeing what he needed.

"You're free Will. Run if you need to. But I'll be here. I'll be waiting for you when you're ready."

Will sighed with relief, his shoulders sagging. He rested his cheek in the hollow of Hannibal's neck. He could stay without fear. It was almost easy then, being able to give in. Being able to cave to Hannibal's will knowing the man would let him go if he needed.

Until then, he was safe. Secure in Hannibal's strong arms, away from every danger that wanted him. He could rest here knowing Hannibal meant safety. Hannibal meant kindness and gentle hands. Hannibal meant freedom.

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Will rested all the next day and the day after. Hannibal stayed with him. Making sure he took medicine and ate, kept him company, made him feel safe. Will only protested when Hannibal refused to go to class. Will hated that the man was missing classes, but Hannibal staying made him feel secure. Plus when Will did try to argue, Hannibal gave him a hard look that booked no further arguments.

Will would never promise to stay, but Hannibal had. And Hannibal, Will noticed, never broke his promises.

So, Will just focused on recovering as quickly as possible so Hannibal could get back to classes.

He tried not to think too far in advance for himself. Would he be able to return to his classes? His job? Hannibal had called Alana for him and told her he wouldn't be able to go in for a couple days. Will was half angry, half thankful to the man. He needed to work. But he didn't know if he could. To somehow serve coffee, smile at rude customers, look into their judging eyes all the while feeling encroaching danger from every corner? It seemed impossible.

Mason was there, waiting in the shadows. The question was when and where would Mason be waiting for him? He didn't even know if he could handle going to class, let alone outside.

He'd be looking over his shoulder the whole time. Maybe he could become a hermit and never leave Hannibal's house. A live-in boyfriend.

He immediately squashed that idea. He wanted to be independent. That was the whole point of getting away from Mason, that, and the horror that was Mason. He wanted to have his own job, make his own money, and live his own life. It seemed impossible now that Mason was there. Everything would just reverse back to the way it was.

He fell into a gloomy despair. He didn't want to talk. Preferring to roll up into his blankets and shut out the world and Hannibal. He wanted to drink and forget everything, but he has no idea where Hannibal kept the alcohol or if the older student even had any. He could ask or wander out and find it, but he had no energy or motivation. So he just wallowed in bed resentful and sullen.

Beverly showed up on the third day, banging on the door demanding to be let in. Will had no idea how she'd found Hannibal's apartment (definitely a house), but Beverly was studying to be an investigator, so in a way it made sense.

"Open this fucking door Hannibal!" Beverly yelled.

Will was resting on the couch. Hannibal had demanded he move rooms. Something about *getting fresh air* and a *change of scenery is good, Will*. A bunch of bullshit to Will, but Hannibal had been pretty demanding.

Hannibal came from the kitchen carrying a platter of nachos. The nachos were Hannibal's bargaining chip to get Will out of bed. Will had been conned into believing the nachos were already prepared, but Hannibal had left *that* detail out. Instead Will was forced to wait, bundled in blankets, on the couch while Hannibal busied himself in the kitchen. The older student was practically preening at having gotten Will out of bed. Will just sourly glared at him from the couch, having no energy to move back upstairs nor get up and kick Hannibal in the shins. Instead he had busied himself in searching with his limited gaze for alcohol and sulking. Both were interrupted as Beverly banged loudly again.

Hannibal gave Will a wiry look, "Should we answer the door?"

Will shrugged, feeling not an inch of remorse for the con artist who had stolen his warm bed "Your funeral."

Hannibal scoffed with a little smile as he placed the nachos down on the coffee table, "Yours too. She does not sound happy."

"Open the fucking door! I can literally see your car in the drive, Hannibal. I know you're here!" Beverly yelled.

Will smirked, "I'm an innocent in Beverly's eyes, you're just the mean boyfriend who isn't telling her anything"

Hannibal wrinkled his nose, "You're also not responding to her."

"Not my fault," Will said innocently, "You took my phone."

Hannibal had in fact not taken his phone. It was sitting upstairs on the dresser, where Will had been ignoring it in his depressive episode. But Beverly didn't know that, and Beverly would believe Will over Hannibal.

Hannibal shook his head in mock disappointment, "You wound me."

Will grinned. Maybe the first smile in a couple of days. It kind of hurt his face, his skin stretching all weird. Hannibal made an amused glance at the door, "What are we telling her?"

"Eh," Will hadn't thought too much about it, but he decided on a story quickly, "Say I got mugged again. I live in a dangerous neighborhood and all."

"She probably won't believe you." Hannibal said seriously.

But Will just rolled his eyes. It was this story or none. There was no way he was telling Beverly the truth.

"Will? Hannibal! Open the door!" Beverly hollered again.

Will released an arm from his blanket burrito wrap and grabbed a giant nacho chip, loaded with cheese and meat and whatever luxury salsa Hannibal had poured over it. He took a giant bite, moaning dramatically with pleasure. He waved Hannibal away with a mouthful of chips, "Go answer the door."

"We could pretend not to be home," Hannibal suggested even as he walked towards the door that seemed to be heaving with each thud from Beverly.

"You're being a wimp," Will called after him.

A moment later Will heard Beverly shove through the door, there was a smack and little "ow," from Hannibal followed by Beverly bursting into the living room.

"Will!"

He let himself be tackled in a hug. He was fine. Injuries mostly healed, faded bruises on his face nearly gone. But it didn't stop the little flinch when she held him.

"Are you ok?" She asked worriedly.

"Yeah," He patted her back awkwardly, hoping she'd move away.

Thankfully she got the message, pulling back, "What happened?" She demanded, "I have been calling and looking for you for days!"

"I-uh, I've been here," Will said rather lamely.

"You've been here," Beverly repeated back in disbelief, "Will, what the hell is going on?"

Will's fingers twirled together nervously, "It's hard to talk about," He glanced up at Hannibal for support. He was leaning against the entrance watching the exchange. Unfortunately, Beverly followed his gaze and interpreted the meaning negatively.

She shot up from the couch and pointed accusatively at Hannibal, "Get out!"

"Wait, Bev—" Will tried to grab her hand.

"It's alright," Hannibal said quickly, "You both need to talk. I'll be in the study."

He left. Beverly stared angrily at his back until they were completely alone, then she whipped around.

"Are you sure you're ok?"

Will nodded, suddenly feeling not quite so sure of himself without Hannibal. *Dependent. Weak. Needy*, his mind screamed. Still, he unintentionally looked towards the exit where Hannibal had disappeared. Beverly glared, "What did he do?"

"Nothing," Will said too quickly.

Beverly didn't believe him, "You said you guys had a fight. And then you didn't fucking show up when you said you would. You don't answer your phone. Where were you? Why are you here with him?"

"I'm sorry. Look, Bev, let me explain."

"You have about a minute to explain before I go and bust his ass!" Beverly warned.

Will winced, "Hannibal's not the bad guy here." She looked unconvinced to say the least. Will sighed rubbing his tired face, "He's helping me out, ok? I got mugged again."

"Jesus Christ, Will!" She gasped and he was suddenly getting hugged again. She pulled away, touching his bruised face gently. He tried not to flinch, but failed. Beverly pulled back, her demeanor suddenly careful and apologetic. He looked away, hating how pathetic he felt.

"That's how you got these new ones?" Beverly asked and very slowly gestured at his bruised face as if telegraphing each movement for him. He was grateful he didn't flinch again. *Pathetic.*

"Yeah," He muttered, "I'm sorry I didn't call."

"Oh my God, Will, don't apologize. You were hurt, fuck."

Will nodded, taking the out.

Beverly sighed, "You have to get out of wherever you're living. Jesus, you don't have enough skin for all these bruises."

Will hummed in agreement, the conversation finally moving in the right direction, "Yeah, that's why I'm here. Hannibal's still letting me crash here. And... And I'm not going back."

He wasn't. Not to some crappy apartment that didn't exist, but to his past life. To Louisiana. To Mason. He was not going back.

Beverly put a comforting hand on his shoulder, giving him a little squeeze. "I get it. You needed a place. But, god, Will you could have come to me. I mean, you texted you guys had a fight. I am only sorta joking that I thought he kidnapped you. He can be an ass!"

Will gave a half smile. He had not thought about the fight. He was, in fact, actively avoiding thinking about what Hannibal had said (*admitted, revealed, confessed*). No, one giant problem at a time. Instead he tried to smooth things over. Diminish it in Beverly's eyes.

"We had a disagreement. But we've talk."

Big ol' lie... Will had conveniently shut Hannibal out for the past few days, only accepting his comforting presence. Nothing else.

"And we're... good. Boyfriends can fight and still get along."

Beverly narrowed her eyes, "You can tell me if he did anything, you know?"

"He didn't! I swear, he didn't. He's been nothing but sweet and kind." *True. Also he's a murderer. Don't think about that!* God, he really wanted a drink.

"Why haven't you been to classes or answering your messages?"

Will sighed, fiddling with the end of his shirt, "I dunno. It's just stressful, and I can't explain it's— it's— hard. I am sorry though. I didn't mean to make you worry. I'm not used to all the care and shit."

Beverly sighed, shaking her head, "You're a fucking idiot."

"I know," Will agreed somberly.

"But I care about you, you dummy. You got people here for you."

Will smiled weakly. He knew that, but he also knew he could survive without people. He had always struggled by himself. He could survive alone. *Not that he wanted to do it alone.*

"Thanks Beverly," He said softly, feeling his cheeks tinge a bit with bashfulness. God, he was such a sucker for kindness.

"Not a problem. Now when are you coming back to classes? I've been covering for you but there's projects coming up. Professors are getting antsy."

Will nodded quickly, "Yeah, soon. Soon. I took off work and school, but I need to get back. Scholarship and everything."

He meant that too. He wanted to get back. Needed to. Beverly swept into talking about the last few days. Her idle conversation was a comfort to Will. They sat and ate nachos and tried to forget about Will's bruises and the sudden disappearance. Will was grateful to Beverly, she knew how to lift his spirits.

After together eating the entire plate of nachos and Beverly showing him a bunch of funny videos on her phone, Hannibal peaked in the room. He must have gotten bored in the study. It was the wrong decision because as soon as Beverly spotted him, she threw a couch pillow at him. Hannibal easily dodged it.

"Am I allowed back in?"

"No!" Beverly shot back as she slung another pillow. This one hit Hannibal's chest but he caught it in his hands. Will giggled at the two of them. Beverly shot him a wounded look and Hannibal smirked.

"Will!" She gasped, "I'm mad at him!"

"I know, but I'm hungry," Will whined, soaking up every bit of manipulative pity he could.

Beverly rolled her eyes, "Fucking hell– Hannibal! Your boyfriend is hungry, get him food."

Hannibal raised an amused eyebrow, looking between the two of them, "Will?"

Will waved his hand, feeling on top of the world surrounded by his protective best friend and doting boyfriend, "Bev says I should be mad at you, but I'm just too hungry and I don't want to move."

"Me neither," Beverly agreed, slumping on the couch. Will liked this, covered in blankets and pillows with Beverly near and Hannibal watching over. It felt safe and nice.

"Would you like more nachos?" Hannibal asked, indicating the very empty plate on the coffee table.

Will shook his head, "No, but pizza sounds nice"

Hannibal nodded, "I'll get it started."

Beverly went back to showing him videos and Will sighed in contentment. If only this could last forever.

They ate pizza together later. Beverly finally seemed to forgive Hannibal and let him join them on the couch. Hannibal had wasted no time in saddling right up next to Will and pulling him close to his side. Will snuggled in and rested his head on Hannibal's shoulder. They put on a movie, and Will valiantly tried to stay awake, but nestled close to Hannibal, warm, and feeling safe, he drifted off to sleep.

When he woke, Hannibal was still there, running his fingers lightly through Will's hair. Will shifted, glancing around the darkened living room, "Where's Bev?"

"She went home."

"Oh," Will sighed, letting himself draw closer to Hannibal, "I should have said goodbye."

"She didn't want to wake you," Hannibal reassured him with a light kiss to the top of his head, "She did read me my rights though."

"As she should. What she threaten?"

"Something about a fiery death? I'm not too concerned."

"You should be. She means business," Will said amused.

Hannibal's hand came back to his hair, the calming soft tugs and light scratches. He spoke seriously, "I'm not planning on failing. I'm going to keep you safe."

Will shifted so he could look Hannibal in the face, "You mean that don't you."

Hannibal nodded, "I do."

"Fucking macho man," Will teased, looking away. He couldn't let his mind dwell on how incredible a feeling hearing those words were. So he turned to teasing, his way of hiding just how meaningful it was.

Hannibal pulled him close and kissed him, as if sensing Will's internal struggle. "I love you. I'm not going to let anything happen to you."

Will froze.. There was something in Hannibal's voice. Something dark and ugly. He had seen it before. In the study room when Hannibal had told him the things he'd be willing to do. Wanted to do. Had done before. Would do again.

Will moved before he could think, straddled Hannibal's lap, wincing slightly at the twinge of pain. Hannibal's hands were immediately on him, trying to move Will back to his comfortable position. But Will refused. He pushed into Hannibal's space and forcing himself down on Hannibal's lap. His hands grasped hard at the older student's shoulders, forcing Hannibal to look at him squarely.

"What are you doing?" Hannibal asked, he looked unsure of himself now. *A perfect fucking mask.*

Will narrowed his eyes, "What are you doing *Lecter* ?"

Hannibal cocked his head to his side, "I don't know what you mean."

"Like hell you do, what are you planning?"

A flicker of surprise passed Hannibal's face before it was flattened into obscurity. A blank innocence that Will could see straight through.

"Planning?" Hannibal asked.

Will had seen it. Will knew. And Hannibal had admitted to it himself just a few days ago.

"You can't kill him."

Fingers tightened on Will's waist, a barely noticeable reaction from the hidden killer.

"You can't," Will repeated, louder this time.

Hannibal's eyes drifted away, looking past Will. Avoiding the confrontation. Avoiding any false promises.

That will not do .

Will grabbed Hannibal's face. Forcing the man's eyes to meet his, "You can't kill him!"

Hannibal remained calm, stoically so, "Will, now is not the time to discuss this."

"Yes it is!" Will gasped. He wanted to shake Hannibal for being so stubborn, "If we don't you'll just go and do it next time I close my eyes."

Hannibal spoke slowly, "Would that be so bad, Will? Waking up free and safe?"

Will said nothing, the storm inside his mind pulling him in different ways. It'd be so easy to let Hannibal take care of it. Release control and drift into the sunny certainty of his affection. Mason would be gone in a blink of an eye. No one would yank on his tether or hold him down.

But Mason would always be lurking. In some dark recess of his mind he'd always be there. Mason had a hold on him. One that made him afraid and weak. with no ability to fight back. Mason could die. But Will would live with his lingering shadow, the stain on his psyche.

"Will?"

"No—" Will shook his head, fighting the frenzy that was making him tremble, "--No. You're not killing him."

"I—," But Hannibal stopped when Will glared at him. "I don't understand. Why?"

Will softened at Hannibal's pleading expression. He wanted Will safe, that was his main prerogative. Will could read the darker possessive implications behind his boyfriend's eyes, but mainly the need to protect shown through. Hannibal's large hands wrapped around his and pulled them down from his face, cradling them at his chest.

"Mylimasis— why? Wouldn't it be better?" Hannibal asked, his eyes searching Will's for any cracks, "You'd be safe. He'd never lay a finger on you again."

"No."

"Why are you protecting him?"

Will flinched, feeling slapped by Hannibal's words, "I'm not!"

"Mason is not worth the air he breathes."

"I know!"

"Then let me kill him."

"You can't!"

"Why not?" Hannibal voice was tight now.

"You can't! Because—Because—," Will struggled to voice his confusing thoughts, finally pushing the words out in a shout, "Because, I want to!"

Hannibal's mouth fell open in surprise, "What?"

Will looked away.

Hannibal's hand cupped Will's chin, turning him back. Hannibal's eyes dark and full of admiration, "You want to kill him?"

Will nodded silently. He couldn't voice what he really wanted, because it was so terrible and evil. He wanted to strangle Mason and watch the life leave his eyes. He wanted to stab and cut him, to make him bleed like he had made Will bleed. He wanted to make Mason cry, and spit on his face and laugh at his pain. He wanted the man to suffer.

Will shuddered. It was evil and despicable. Why did he want something so depraved? Was there something wrong with him?

"Shh, Mylimasis," Hannibal hushed. And Will realized he was crying. Hannibal soothed him, "It's alright, darling."

Hannibal pulled him closer, and Will went willingly. Tucking his face in the older man's neck and allowing himself to cry on Hannibal's shoulder. Hannibal rubbed relaxing circles on his back and spoke softly in a foreign language. He was still sure his fantasy was evil, but he knew Hannibal loved him no matter what.

"Will, you are beyond anything I could imagine," Hannibal whispered into his ear.

"Hannibal—," Will wanted to say those three little words, but he couldn't bring himself to, though he felt them in his bones. He didn't know if he was capable of love, not when so much darkness was in his mind. "--It's wrong. It's so, so wrong...But I want it all the same. Tell me I shouldn't."

"Vengeance is not wrong."

"When I close my eyes, it's either him hurting me or some dark version of myself killing him— no, that's not the right word— butchering. Slaughtering him in the most inhumane ways.

That's more than vengeance, Hannibal. That's—that's murder. And that's not right. It's not right. Tell me it's wrong."

"You'd be slaying a monster," Hannibal said instead, "You'd be a hero."

"You're not suppose to say that." Will whined, he felt sorry for himself. Being stuck with the murderer as his boyfriend, he was unfortunately tasked with being the moral one. He couldn't expect any restraint from Hannibal.

Hannibal apologized by peppering his face with kisses, light butterfly kisses across his forehead, his eyes, his cheeks, his nose.

"You're not being fair," Will sighed, knowing he was losing and oddly, not finding it difficult to resist.

Hannibal didn't answer, just continued his journey to his chin, his jaw, his neck. He seemed to very purposely miss Will's lips, leaving him aching for their touch.

"Hannibal," Will begged when the older student began sucking a hickey on his neck.

"Mi amor, hero, let me love you."

"H—Hannibal," Will groaned as Hannibal grabbed his thighs and pulled him impossibly closer. He wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck, running his fingers through Hannibal's feathery hair as he let the devout sinner steal his breath away with kisses that made him shiver and quake.

"Hann—Hannibal— kiss me kiss me kiss—"

Hannibal kissed him. Will felt like he was floating. Hannibal's wonderful hands were on him, one slipped under his knee, and another slid up his back. Hannibal turned him, not breaking their kiss and laid Will back on the couch. The taller man hovered over, letting just their mouths connect before Will became impatient. He pulled down, forcing Hannibal to lower himself, and finally their bodies touched again. He opened his mouth to moan, but Hannibal filled it, exploring his mouth.

"You're beautiful, Will," Hannibal whispered, letting Will gasp for air.

"H—H—ah—," Will moaned as Hannibal kissed just below ear causing him to stutter. He never felt like this, never so wholly enthralled.

"Beautiful. Beautiful mind, beautiful body, beautiful desires."

"Han—Nu—n—" Will managed to argue before Hannibal was kissing him again.

He felt consumed by Hannibal. Like the older student's desire was all he could feel. He realized with little surprise that his empathy was going haywire. Hannibal was letting him in, letting him read everything, and Will had never felt— or read someone so—so totally in love with him.

"Will—" Hannibal gasped like an alleluia.

"Hannibal! Please! I want you—Ha—na—"

Hannibal was kissing him again, but this time the palm of his hand was pressed firmly against Will's straining crouch. Will made a pitiful sound that only made Hannibal kiss him harder.

"May I?" Hannibal gasped for breath, his hand meandering towards the hem of Will's pants.

"Y-yes—" Will stuttered. He was incredibly close already. Reading Hannibal's adoration was a greater turn on than anything physical, yet when Hannibal's daft fingers slid beneath the hem of his clothes, brushing through his hair, before his warm palm wrapped around him, Will choked back his ecstasy. His eyes rolled back and he moaned loudly.

Hannibal covered him, kissing him hard as he dragged his hand up Will's member. It was an awkward angle, trapped under the clothing, but Hannibal kept the steady motion as Will arched up against him.

There seemed to be no time or energy to remove clothing. Lust was all consuming and Will let himself drown in the feeling. He dug his fingers into Hannibal's shoulders keeping the man upon him in a searing kiss. The hand on him never stopped and he felt himself about to cum.

He threw his head back in a half scream and shout, calling, "Hannibal!" as he came.

The pleasure was better than any drink or drug he could take and he basked in its revelry, panting between Hannibal's persistent kisses.

He came back to himself when Hannibal's hand, still gently stroking him, became too much. He pried his fingers from Hannibal's back and tugged the man's arm up. Hannibal released him, sliding his sticky fingers up and holding his waist. Massaging the cum covered fingers on Will as he planted kisses on Will's reddened lips.

"Fuck," Will groaned when Hannibal took a moment to lav on his neck. They stayed there soaking in each other as Will came back to himself.

"That was good," Will finally said, letting his hands curl into Hannibal's straight hair. The man hummed in agreement from where his face was hidden in Will's neck. Will liked this, holding Hannibal against his chest. He felt no need to reciprocate anything to Hannibal. He had wanted to give this to Will. To make him feel wonderful and loved. And he had. Will knew Hannibal wanted nothing more than his utmost pleasure, for Will to try and give anything back would be seen as an offense. So, Will let Hannibal rest against him, breathing in Will's contentment as Will ran his fingers through his straw hair.

"It was so good," Will praised again, tugging a bit more at Hannibal's hair. Hannibal turned to him, smiling softly and kissing his cheek.

"You're so good to me," Will whispered, "You'd do anything for me."

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed worshipfully, “Anything.”

“Anything for me. Promise me anything,” Will murmured as Hannibal sucked on the other side of his neck. Will knew it would bruise, but he couldn’t find it in himself to mind.

“Anything for you,” Hannibal promised.

“Then you won’t kill Mason,” Will stated firmly, turning his head so he could look more directly at the murderer above him.

Hannibal paused his ministrations, his lips ticking slightly upward at Will’s trick, amused at Will’s cleverness. For a moment Will didn’t think he’d promise, but then Hannibal leaned in close, his nose brushing Will’s.

“Mason will die by your hand, Will. I promise. I will see you covered in his blood, victorious above that pig.”

As if to seal the promise, Hannibal kissed him hard. Will let him, arching up into it. It wasn’t the promise he’d been expecting, but neither was Hannibal the boyfriend he’d been expecting. Everything was in upheaval, all his expectations thwarted. But through the chaos, he found peace. Hannibal would guide him and he would be victorious.

He would kill Mason Verger.

Chapter End Notes

Murder! Murder! Murder! Murder! :D

Nothing to see

After Hannibal's declaration, Will promptly attempted to push it from his mind.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, he'd kill Mason, whatever. It's not like it was happening anytime soon. Or maybe not anytime ever. He wasn't a murderer, he couldn't be. Hannibal could make all the promises he wanted, guide him in any direction, but that didn't mean Will would actually do it. Sure, he wanted to, but thought and action were very different things.

He batted down any thrilling thoughts of Mason's screams or bloodied face pummeled by his equally bloody fists. He wasn't that person. Not yet at least. The excitement was just Hannibal's, yes? He was just reading into Hannibal's desires. Will tried not to think of the other possibility: That these were his dark desires all on his own.

Instead, he chose to focus on the warm body blanketing him. Hannibal's lips were permanently glued to Will's neck, sucking gentle kisses into the skin all night. The man seemed to know that Will was having an internal battle and chose to combat it by pretending to be asleep and reminding him he was there with his comforting mass. Will eventually fell asleep, holding Hannibal tightly.

*

They went to the thrift store the next day.

After several days of wallowing in his misery, Will had had enough of self pity. He wanted to do something. He had originally wanted to go to his classes but Hannibal didn't want him going anywhere without a coat. It had gotten even colder in the last few days. The compromise: go out to get a coat.

Hannibal wanted them to go to some downtown store that had custom fittings but Will refused. He could not afford something like that. He had worked hard for weeks in the cold. He wanted to buy his own coat for himself. So, much to Hannibal's complaining, they ended up at the rundown salvation army store.

Hannibal stood looking disgusted at a badly shaped flower arrangement in the store's nickname department. He looked seriously displeased as if the flowers had personally offended him.

"What do you think?"

"Plastic flowers should be illegal," Hannibal answered, still looking aghast at the flashy pinks and blues.

"No, look," Will held up the brown corduroy jacket he'd found. It had a thick felt lining for the harsh northern winter days, "What do you think?"

Hannibal turned, catching the jacket in his hands. None of the other coats had passed his review yet, even though Will demanded they stay in the 'maybe' pile in the cart. Hannibal critically examined the fabric, looking for errors.

"It's frayed on the cuffs—"

"A little worn, yes but not frayed," Will defended.

"One of the cuff links is missing—"

"I've never used those buttons," Will shot back.

Hannibal brought the jacket to his face and sniffed, "It smells dusty."

"Dusty isn't a smell, and yes, it needs a wash, but then it'll be fine." Will grabbed the jacket back and slipped it on. He could tell Hannibal wanted to tell him to take it off, that it might have bugs or something. But the man just settled on a stoic look of suffering: his lips pinched unhappily and his brow ever so slightly furrowed in worry.

"How does it look?" Will asked. Hannibal's gaze had him picking at the sleeves nervously. Who knew he'd care so much about the older student's opinion of a jacket.

"Spin for me."

Will did an awkward turn. He blushed, knowing full well Hannibal's eyes were not necessarily on the jacket. He glanced up, annoyed when he saw Hannibal smirking.

"What?" Will asked crossly.

"You look stunning in anything, but I think this one compliments your eyes."

Will reddened more and punched Hannibal's arm lightly, "Sap."

Hannibal caught his arm and pulled him into a hug and kissed him. Will looked puzzled at him, "What was that for?"

"For being stubborn," Hannibal grinned, "Let me buy you a nice coat."

"No, I got my own money," Will detangled himself from Hannibal's embrace with a huff, "Why don't you buy jiffy peanut butter for me?"

"So stubborn," Hannibal sighed, "But if you're done tormenting me, get the jacket. It's the best one you've found."

Will smiled happy to have Hannibal's approval, "I wanna look at hats now."

"Absolutely not," Hannibal shuddered, "Lice, Will! Lice!"

Will grinned, "But my head's cold."

"I have hats at home as well as scarves and gloves. Please don't risk lice."

"Fine..." Will rolled his eyes then asked curiously, "Would you kick me out if I had lice?"

"Tempting but no," Hannibal gave him a dry look, "I'm afraid I would suffer in your presence. May have to quarantine you in your room though."

"What a saint," Will rolled his eyes, "Are you germaphobe? Or do you just have nightmares about lice?"

"I enjoy being clean," Hannibal took the cart and began hanging the rejected coats and jackets back on the rack.

Will slumped over the cart's basket watching him carefully hang each coat, brushing imaginary dirt and straightening the lapels on the hanger. Hannibal hated the store, and yet he was creating order out of it. Will wondered if he had some sort of obsessive disorder or if Hannibal just liked moth-eaten jackets hung well. His hands were quick and decisive as if not standing to touch the jackets longer than needed. As if they were diseased, but still needed order.

"You hate being dirty or rather being counted as part of the rabble," Will observed without thinking, "Pristine and cleanliness are necessary parts of your life. Helps you keep control."

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, "You see all that?"

"And more. You had a traumatic experience when you were young. You promised yourself it would never happen again. Never lose control again. You're above those disgusting animals. That's you."

Hannibal put the last discarded coat on the rack. Will licked his lips nervously, "Am I wrong?"

Hannibal smiled softly, "No."

He pushed the cart forward, pointedly leading Will towards the registers. Will grinned and skipped to catch up. He threaded his arm through Hannibal's as he pushed the cart, "So, you gonna tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"Your trauma. Tell me why the great Hannibal Lecter has to be in control."

Hannibal's hands tightened minisculely on the handle, "No."

"Oh come on!" Will whined, "You know mine!" He knew he was pushing his luck, but Hannibal had seen him at his lowest. Will felt he deserved equal vulnerability.

Hannibal pushed the cart forward again and Will scrambled to keep up. Hannibal was displaying his vacantly interested face Will saw him use in class when he was thinking of other things.

"Why won't you tell me?"

“It was a long time ago, and I prefer not to think of it.”

That seemed to settle the matter but Will wanted more. He'd always want more when Hannibal was involved. Yet he could understand Hannibal's preference. He shut out most of the things Mason did to him. Trying to lose them in drink and drugs and only managing to be partly successful. So, he sighed in resignation, “I get it. Not wanting to think about it. Do you wish you could forget? I do.”

Hannibal paused and pulled him close, pressing a comforting kiss to his forehead, "We learn from our memories."

Will chuckled, "Just wish I had better memories. Don't you?"

"No. Everything that has been, has shaped who I am. Helped form it. Grow it. But I've always been who I would become."

"You were destined to be who you are. No circumstance made you," Will surmised. He didn't know if he believed it. Would Hannibal have always been a murderer? Would he have always loved him?

"Destined?" Hannibal smiled at him now, "You're speaking now of fates. But I suppose, yes, if there is fate to be had. It's your's and I's."

Will grinned at him, "I'd like that. I want to say we're destined for each other."

Hannibal pulled him close, "I'm going to make sure you only have memories you want to remember."

"Sap," Will kissed him.

"Let me buy you a coat." Hannibal breathed on his lips.

Will laughed, swiftly spinning out of his grasp, jacket in hand, "No. It's destined: *I'm* buying this coat."

"Stubborn," Hannibal muttered, but he didn't look particularly annoyed, just loving and fond. Will loved it. He could bask in the attention all day.

When the seven dollar coat was paid for *by Will* and safely in an old plastic bag, Hannibal took his hand and escorted him to the car. The Bentley looked extremely out of place in the rundown parking lot. Hannibal opened Will's door for him to climb in before quickly getting in the driver's side.

Will squeezed the plastic bag in his lap, he felt so happy. He had gotten the coat! One step towards independence done! He wanted to kiss Hannibal more to celebrate, but when he turned to, Hannibal had a fierce expression on his face, staring at the rearview mirror.

Will turned to look behind them, but he didn't see anything. Just a bunch of cars in the lot. He looked back, Hannibal's expression hadn't changed. He swallowed nervously, "What is it, Hannibal?"

Hannibal didn't answer, he just started the car. Will glanced back again as they pulled out of the lot, in time to see a black car pull out behind them. It had dark windows. The light joy he had been feeling turned to stone with dread.

"Han—?"

"Will," Hannibal tried to silence him.

"Is it Mason?" Will whispered.

"I don't know, Mylimasis," Hannibal said quietly, "I couldn't place him in the store."

"The store—?" Will whipped around in his seat, "He was in the store?!"

"Will, calm down. He didn't look like Mason," Hannibal said evenly.

"That doesn't mean he doesn't work for Mason!" Will protested, "What did he look like?"

"Large, balding. Will, please try to calm down," Hannibal tried to ease his worry, but Will could only think of a singular large balding man that worked for Mason.

"It's Cordell," Will shuddered. He was trembling badly and shrinking in his seat, "He's coming to get me— Fuck, Mason sent him! He always does Mason's dirty work."

"Will, please, we're almost home," Hannibal tried, but Will was shaking.

"No! We can't go there— then they'll know. They'll know where I am!"

"Will, I think the car has been following us since we left the house. Mason is rich and has resources beyond normal means. It's likely he already knows where you are."

Will paled, the thought of Mason knowing where he lived, where Hannibal lived was terrifying. He squeezed the plastic bag in his fists. He felt so angry. He had spent a wonderful morning with Hannibal for it to be ruined by Mason.

"Stop the car," Will demanded.

"I don't think that's a good idea Will," Hannibal said.

"I said, stop the car!" Will yelled.

Hannibal frowned, but pulled to the side of the road. Will was out of the door, before the vehicle had stopped. He could hear Hannibal shouting something behind him, but all he could comprehend was the pounding blood behind his ears. *How dare they follow him. How dare they interrupt his day.*

He was around the back of the car, bolting towards the black vehicle. It had slowed down, and Will raised his hands pummeled the car, screaming, "Don't follow us!"

Will could see nothing through the windows, just his manic reflection distorted by the glass. He banged on the window daring whoever was driving to reveal themselves. The car jolted forward, and Will stumbled back. He fell backwards, his hands scrapping the pavement while the car tore down the road away.

“Fuckers!” Will yelled after them. His nails scrapped the pavement and he flung the bits of gravel at the fading taillights of the car, “Fucking cowards!”

Hands wrapped under his armpits and he was pulled up to standing. Will immediately shoved the hands away, stumbling further into the street.

“Will!” Hannibal grabbed his arm and yanked him off the road as another came speeding down the street.

“Don’t touch me!” Will flung Hannibal’s hand off him. He couldn’t stand to be touched. He stormed back to the car, his door still open. He slid in, slamming the door shut in anger.

Hannibal appeared in the driver’s seat a moment later. They sat in silence, other than Will’s ragged panting. Will squeezed his eyes shut, balled his fists letting his nails dig into his palm. *Why was this happening?*

“Are you alright, Will?” Hannibal’s voice broke through.

He gritted his teeth, “I’m fine, just drive.”

“You scraped your hands, let me see them,” Hannibal insisted.

“No!” Will turned away quickly, shoving his hands under his arms.

“Will, what are you doing?”

“Going home. That’s what we’re doing.” Will yelled. If he let go of this anger, he’d end up crying. He did not want to cry.

“We’re not leaving until you tell me what happened,” Hannibal said coolly.

“Then we’re gonna be here all day,” Will snapped back.

“Please explain to me why you are throwing yourself into the middle of the street?”

“I wasn’t! I was perfectly safe!”

“I pulled you off the road,” Hannibal retorted, “How is that safe?”

“Fuck you Hannibal. I was fucking angry. Can’t I just be angry!?”

“Of course, mylimasis,” Hannibal sighed, “But that was beyond anger. That was self-sabotaging and stupid.”

Will moved to open the door. If he stayed another minute with Hannibal, he'd either explode or burst into tears. The door locked as his fingers wrapped around the handle. His head snapped to Hannibal, who's traitorous finger was on the control.

"What the hell, Hannibal?" Will yelled.

"You're not running off like this," Hannibal said calmly.

Will rattled the handle, remembering Hannibal's promise to let him go. *Why wasn't he letting him go? Because this is not the type of leaving Hannibal had promised. You're being stupid.* He knew this was an overreaction. He knew he wasn't thinking clearly. Still he yelled, "Fuck off! You don't get to dictate my life!"

"Whenever you storm off, you get hurt," Hannibal replied seriously.

"I do not!"

"You do," Hannibal argued, "And I don't want to see you hurt."

"Tough!" Will snapped.

Hannibal sighed, "Let me see your hands, then I'll drive us home."

For a minute Will considered continuing his angry torrent. He could yell and bash Hannibal all day because he knew the man wouldn't retaliate. It was safe to be blindly angry with him.

But Hannibal didn't deserve it. So Will shoved his palms in Hannibal's face, furiously blinking back the tears that had been forming.

"Thank you, Will."

Hannibal gently took his hands inspecting them with critical care. There was no blood, just the first layer skin had been scraped back with bits of pavement rubble still caught on his palms. Still Hannibal treated them with utmost care. He brushed the little bits of dirt away, before kissing each wound reverently.

Will flinched at the kindness and a tear escaped his eye. He yanked his hands away to frantically rub any other traitorous tears from escaping.

"We'll clean it when we get home," Hannibal said as he started the car.

Will hunched away from the man, leaning against the window as far as he could to escape Hannibal's eyes. He hated the feeling of weakness. He hated that Hannibal could see it. He wanted to be angry all the time. *You are angry all the time*, his mind said, *You just choose to hide it.*

Will bit his lip suppressing any emotion from boiling over. He needed to get a handle on this situation. He couldn't blow up like that again. He needed to cope. He was good at coping— he just needed a few drinks and he'd be good as new.

Freedom is like a kite

There was indeed liquor in the house. It was like Will was drawn to it now. A line connected him to the substance, and it pulled hard. He was in the house before Hannibal and knew instantly where the man kept the bottles. A cabinet, hidden by the fireplace. Will's eyes darted to it, seeing there was no lock, he dashed upstairs to his room before Hannibal could say anything.

He closed himself in his room, ignoring Hannibal's soft knock that came moments later.

“Will?” Came Hannibal's gentle rumble.

Will waited with bated breath to see if he would force the door. He did not.

The concerned man moved off, seeming to decide Will needed space. Will listened hard for his footsteps. They disappeared down the hall towards the study. Will waited a minute and then he opened the door.

He tiptoed to the stairs, descending them quickly. He was good at being quiet and getting around without notice, he learned it the hard way over the years. Still, he felt like an imposter and thief. Scratch that, he was a thief. He hadn't asked Hannibal for the alcohol and here he was taking it on his own accord. It was the epitome of thievery.

Still his fingers lingered over the latch, before snapping it open quickly. The cabinet door swung silently open revealing the treasure of dark bottles filled with the addicting elixir. It called to him and he wrapped his fingers around its neck. He tucked a bottle under his arm, and then another was choked on his desperate grasp. He needed to drink, he needed to forget.

He nudged the cabinet door shut with his elbow. Even though it only let out a small click, he winced. He stood still waiting for the sound of feet on the stairs, for Hannibal's disappointed—angry voice to descend on him. Calling him a thief, a filthy animal, to get out of his house.

He stood panting, half considering throwing the bottles back into the cabinet to escape the dreadful images racing through his mind.

But eventually his mind stopped spinning and all he wanted was to drown in a drunken haze. Forget who he was, forget what he's done, what he was doing. He went back to his room, he could see the light under the study's door. Hannibal was right there, so close. He might tell Will everything was alright. Maybe he wouldn't hate him.

Will ignored him, pushing into his room quickly. He sat on the bed and thumbed open the first bottle. He held it to his lips and drank.

*

He fell. He wasn't quite sure when, but his knees hit the floor then his elbow, and then his chin. It hurt, but not as much as it could have.

The sound of shattering glass rattled his already aching brain. He groaned, choosing to stay down and nurse his pounding head. He wasn't sure how long he laid there.

Footsteps came.

“Will?”

Will groggily looked up through his drunken stupor.

A monster towered over him. Blackened skin with giant protruding antlers. Piercing red eyes staring at him. It was death looking at him. He should have been frightened, but he wasn't.

He raised a hand towards the beast.

“You're beautiful.”

The beast cocked its head to the side inquisitively and Will was sure it would devour him. It lowered its massive self to a crouch. Its claws extended and its cold talon brushed down Will's face. He shivered, knowing it could pierce his skin, but trusting it wouldn't.

“What are you doing, Mylimasis?” It sighed.

“You're beautiful” Will repeated. He lifted his hand again, this time to trace the jutting line of the monster's cheek bone. The monster made no movement, didn't even blink when he touched it. A line of red was painted on the beast's face. It shone like jewels on the ebony skin.

Will gasped when he saw it. He realized his hand was dripping in the red stuff. Blood? It was beautiful. It made his monster look even more beautiful.

“Beautiful.”

The beast huffed a laugh. It's limbs dipped under Will, and he found himself lifted and cradled in the monster's hold. He sighed, clinging to his beautiful beast, hiding in its sheltering shadow.

It was hazy, like there was a fog over his eyes. The light streamed in from the window and it was entirely too bright and piercing through the muted haze.

Will rolled over on the bed trying to shy away from the light. He immediately regretted it. He gagged as his stomach rolled. He lurched to the edge of the bed and retched. The remains of last night's bottles came gushing out. Will jerked back when the sound of the bile hitting something bounced back too close. Had he thrown up on the bed and not over the edge?

He wearily blinked his eyes, trying to clear his vision. He was met by the swirling brown and yellow sludge pooled in a bowl just below his nose. He cringed back, but another bout slammed him and he vomited again.

“Shh, darling,” A voice said.

Will vaguely realized someone was holding the bowl and brushing his hair back. His torso shook as he retched, and the hand was then rubbing circles on his trembling back. The torrent finally settled for a moment and Will brushed his mouth with the back of his sleeve. Trying to clear the awful sensation from him. It wasn't working.

"I'm going to get you a washcloth."

Will didn't bother responding, just groaned and fell back into his pillows. His head was pounding making it hard to see and think. Hannibal, or the shadowy mass that Will assumed was Hannibal, returned with a damp cloth that wiped his mouth and chin. Cleaning the spittle and bile left behind. Will laid with his eyes clenched close, letting the older man clean his face.

Another cool cloth was placed on his forehead, and Will moaned with relief. He hadn't realized how hot he had become.

"There," Hannibal soothed, "Can you drink some water for me, Mylimasis?"

Will felt a glass pressed against his lips. He was fairly sure he'd just vomit it all back up, but still managed to open his lips and slip when Hannibal tilted the glass. His mouth was dry and coated in stomach residue. The water tasted horrible in his mouth, but he managed to swallow.

"You'll need to eat too," Hannibal said. He pressed the glass back to Will's lips, but Will turned away. He buried himself in the pillows, blocking out the light and Hannibal. His head hurt so much. He couldn't seem to piece why Hannibal was even beside him. Hadn't he been secretly drinking in his room *alone* ?

"How does coffee sound?" Hannibal asked, his hands massaging Will's neck.

"Fucking nice," Will groaned. Coffee would alleviate his pounding headache.

"Alright darling," Hannibal disappeared and Will was left nursing the horrible hangover.

He wondered when Hannibal had come in. When had he brought the bowl? How had he known he was drunk?

Will sighed and dragged a pillow over his face. Maybe he could smother himself before Hannibal returned and avoid the man's judgment.

The door opened too soon.

"Will, your coffee," Hannibal spoke. The older man peeled the pillow away. Will was too weak to stop it.

"Did you have that ready?" Will grunted, glaring at the steaming mug.

"I may have prepared a pot before you woke," Hannibal admitted.

Will managed to shuffle up the bed. He clutched his stomach at the movement. Hannibal set the coffee mug down and quickly grabbed the bowl. Will waved the bowl away, "I'm fine."

Hannibal hesitated, but seemed to believe him and replaced the bowl with the mug once more. He held out the steaming mug and Will took it. He breathed in the comforting smell of hot coffee.

"Thanks," He mumbled. He sipped enjoying the black coffee's hot bite on his throat.

"May I join you?" Hannibal gestured to the space on the bed by Will.

Will hid his surprise with a shrug, "Not worried I'll puke on you?"

"The bowl is nearby, just give me ample warning," Hannibal responded. He still didn't move to climb in the bed. He was waiting for permission, Will realized.

He shifted to the side, making more room for Hannibal, "Sure."

Hannibal slid onto the bed next to him. His arm snuck behind Will's back and he held him pressed to his side, "Is this alright, Mylimasis?"

Will hummed his answer and leaned his head to rest on Hannibal's shoulder. The older man's warm body was comforting and a relief to the sweat-dampened sheets.

"Why are you so nice to me?" Will asked.

"You happen to be very important to me, my love. I want the best for you," Hannibal pressed a kiss to his forehead, "The better question is, why are you unkind to yourself?"

Will groaned, "Nevermind. It's too early in the morning for this."

"It's nearly afternoon."

"I don't want to talk about it." Leave it to Hannibal to want to have deep discussions while he felt like shit. Will sipped the coffee again. It was helping, something non-alcoholic in his swimming stomach.

"Would you like to talk about how you called me beautiful?"

Will almost choked on his coffee.

"What?!" He sputtered, turning to look at the man best he could without triggering a splitting headache or a vomiting mess.

Hannibal smirked at him and kissed his cheek, "You don't have to look so stunned. You were fairly adamant I was the most beautiful thing you ever saw."

"I didn't say that!" Will argued, but even as he did, he remembered the glittering red upon the demon's face. Had that not been a dream?

Hannibal chuckled and kissed his furrowed temple, "You were very near passing out. I won't hold you to it."

"I didn't pass out," Will grumbled, "I must have just fell and hit my head."

"You passed out downstairs after raiding my liquor cabinet." Hannibal explained, "I think you must have tripped and fallen trying to get more bottles. Several bottles shattered, I found you were laying in a pool of Merlot."

Will winced as the memory resurfaced. It hadn't been blood on his hands, just expensive wine, "Fuck, sorry."

"No need to apologize, if anything it's I that need to apologize. I hope you will forgive me, I changed your shirt while you were out. It was badly stained." Hannibal said soberly.

Will glanced down seeing he was now in a cozy sweater likely from Hannibal's closet. It was red and warm and smelled like Hannibal. His pants were the same, which eased his mind. Hannibal had seen him naked, he could trust him, but he was more comfortable knowing when he'd been changed. He snuggled closer to his boyfriend, "It's fine. And I'm still sorry about the bottles."

Hannibal waved him off, "Wine is replaceable. You, however, are not. I don't think drinking yourself to oblivion is helping."

Will huffed, "It's not like that. I just needed a break."

Hannibal kissed his forehead again. It felt nice.

"Have you struggled with an alcoholic addiction for long?"

Will blinked back surprise from the question feeling offended, "Does it look like I'm an alcoholic?"

Hannibal didn't give him the pleasure of an answer. Just humming and rubbing Will's arm gently.

"There are better coping mechanisms."

"Like what? Talking?" Will grunted. He hated that Hannibal knew why he drank, but was also relieved. Hannibal knew therefore there should be no judgment. He hoped at least.

"That is an option." Hannibal answered carefully.

"Is your go to method murder?" Will snapped.

"No, Will," Hannibal said seriously, "While it is cathartic. That is art."

Will tensed his arms. He wanted to say something stupid. Something like, 'that's sick and disgusting'. Something that would really hurt him and get him to drop the subject.

Instead he sighed and leaned his head back, “I don't want to talk about that, and anyways I couldn't say without seeing your... *cathartic art* for myself.”

“Is that something you're interested in seeing?” Hannibal wondered, he sounded almost giddy to Will.

“I have a hangover, don't hold me to anything,” Will grumbled. He would not be blamed for random bodies turning up.

Hannibal kissed on the brow again. Will was realizing the man was avoiding his mouth. *Clean freak*, he thought then immediately winced at the bitter taste in his mouth. Maybe Hannibal had a point avoiding his vomit tasting lips.

“How did it feel to chase the car?” Hannibal asked suddenly.

The car? Ah, the tail, most likely Mason's crony following him. He frowned, he had dug himself a deeper hole with that stunt, “It was pointless. Mason will know I'm ‘riled up’. It'll get the fires stoked,” Will said bitterly, “Mason will be waiting with a brand for his whore. It'll be bad when he finds me.”

Hannibal's grip tightened on him, and Will knew the man was angry for him. If he looked up he'd catch the possessive and protective glare Hannibal was developing just for him.

“I didn't ask about the consequences, I asked how you felt in the moment. When you lept from the car. When your heart was racing and you faced them down. What did you feel at that moment when you took control.”

Will inhaled sharply, Hannibal words triggering the memory clearly. He had been enraged. Justifiably wrathful. He had felt unstoppable when he burst from the car. The stalking vehicle had been speeding towards them, but he had paid no mind. The car would not go through him, because he demanded its attention.

“Powerful,” Will whispered in answer, “I felt a quiet sense of power.”

“Good.”

Will smirked at Hannibal's almost preening answer, “What did you feel?”

“Other than obvious confusion and worry for you?”

Will rolled his eyes, “Yeah, other than your normal macho man feelings.”

“Pride, devotion, adoration. It was a glimpse of the Will hidden under all your barriers. I'd like to see him more.”

Will sighed and let his head rest on Hannibal's shoulder. He had no reply for Hannibal's answer, so he let himself just bask in Hannibal's presence.

It holds

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He desperately wanted to drink more. To stave off the horrible feeling. He wanted to drown in nothingness so he didn't have to face reality.

But Hannibal didn't let him.

The fucking bastard .

Will had tried to get another drink after sobering up enough to *feel* once more. He had drank coffee in bed with Hannibal, until he didn't feel like he would chuck everything up. Then he managed to detangle himself from Hannibal and limp into the shower, alone, despite Hannibal's pleas to let him help. It was there, under the hot torrent of water, Will once more woke from his drunken stupor and observed himself.

What he saw hurt. His trembling body. His useless hands. He immediately wanted to return to his foggy mind. He wanted none of this self acknowledgement. He knew he was broken already. So why did he have to see it so clearly?

He stepped out of the shower, toweling off and avoiding his marred reflection in the mirror. He could see enough of his bruised flesh without it looking back at him.

Instead he looked at Hannibal's crumpled red sweater on the ground. He wished he could put it back on, hide beneath its fabric. Unfortunately, it was damp from sweat and smelled faintly of vomit. Will carefully folded it on the counter before dressing in his own dingy and faded clothes. Layers. He piled layers on his skin. If there was enough clothes, maybe he wouldn't have to see himself.

He made the mistake of glancing in the mirror. There he was, red lined eyes, sunken cheeks, and the worst combination of plaids and flannels to grace the glass reflective surface. But the worst was him. The useless thing hiding because it was so fucking pathetic it couldn't control his own life.

"Fuck you," He told his reflection. He needed a drink badly.

He silently went down the stairs and made his way to the liquor cabinet. When he opened it he was shocked to find it completely empty. His amber escape was missing.

Will slammed the door shut a little too hard.

"Will?" Hannibal asked from the kitchen's entry. He looked weary and his gaze far too comforting to not note Will's anger.

Will glared. Hannibal had stolen his fucking drinks. It wasn't like they were his or anything, but Will felt like he deserved them. He wanted to scream at him, but he really didn't have

anything to scream about. It was Hannibal's alcohol to do with what he wanted. It didn't stop the bitter feeling though.

He huffed and brushed past Hannibal into the kitchen without saying a word. It was the only way he knew how to hurt the man. Deny him his thoughts. By the way Hannibal's lips dipped, he'd say it worked.

"Would you like me to make you something?" Hannibal asked after a moment of watching Will stand rigid in his kitchen.

Will turned and glared, "Mimosas?"

"I highly doubt your stomach can handle that." Hannibal replied smoothly.

Will wanted to say something along the lines of *doubt your stomach can handle my fist when I fucking upper cut your gut*—

Wisely he chose to just give another deathly glare.

"I don't think it's the best to intoxicate yourself so soon after a hangover." Hannibal explained, "I don't think it's wise to intoxicate yourself at all, at this time."

Will's lip curled, "I can do what I want."

"Indeed," Hannibal agreed, "But I won't help you with that particular desire."

"You're the worst," Will muttered beneath his breath with little venom.

Hannibal ignored the comment, pouring two cups of fresh coffee. Will had to give it to him, he was giving him tough love because the fucking jerk gave a shit about him. Having someone love you, Will supposedly, meant they didn't just give you what you want, they gave you what you needed.

"So, what am I supposed to do? Mope around all day again?" Will argued for the sake of being obstinate.

"If you need more rest, you should take it," Hannibal handed him the mug, "But you do have classes you could go to if you want to go out. Beverly has been pestering me about your return."

Will frowned, "She hasn't texted me about it."

"Probably because she doesn't want to pressure you," Hannibal explained gently.

Will huffed. Beverly had only texted him asking how he was feeling along with a multitude of funny videos meant to cheer him up. It was sweet if he didn't already know she was babying him. Her and Hannibal both were acting like he was this weak fragile thing. They were probably right, he was pathetic. A stupid and pathetic piece of shit.

"Whatever you're thinking about isn't true," Hannibal broke his self-loathing thoughts.

“You don’t know what I’m thinking,” Will shot back quickly wiping away whatever expression Hannibal had read on his face.

“No,” Hannibal stepped into his space, his hand lightly cupping Will’s face, “But you get such a sad pout sometimes.”

“It’s not pouting, it’s moping. There’s a difference,” Will joked, soaking in the feeling of his boyfriend’s hands.

“Then let’s get you out of your moping mood. Yes?” Hannibal smiled, brushing his hair behind his ear, “Why don’t you try your classes today?”

His internal voice screaming to just stay put and stay hidden. It would be the smart cowardly thing to do. But looking at Hannibal, he didn’t want to let him down. He wanted to be strong. He forced himself to fight down the fear. He had to overcome it even though it crept up his throat every time he closed his eyes.

“Ok.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this chapter is so short. Writing is hard. Next chapter will be good (plus it's already half written woo-hoo!).

Thanks for sticking with me! :)

Still above the valleys

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Will!” Beverly waved from her seat. Will raised a hand back before turning back to Hannibal. They were standing outside the lecture hall. Will had forced himself to go to classes, he knew Beverly would be there for his intro to criminology class, so he wouldn't be *entirely* alone.

Hannibal cupped his face, “You'll be alright.”

He blushed and nodded, “Yeah, I know.”

“I'll be waiting for you in the commons, as soon as you're done,” Hannibal promised before drawing him close for a chaste kiss on his cheek.

“Better be,” Will mumbled, shuffling his feet in avoidance.

“I promise, mylimasis,” Hannibal said. He gave Will one more kiss before turning and leaving Will to Beverly's boundless hugs.

*

Beverly linked arms with them as they strode out of the class in high spirits. At least Beverly was as happy as a kid in a candy shop. Will had developed a headache half way through the class and tuned out most of the lecture. However, it did give him something else to think about for a while.

“Hannibal's supposed to meet me in the commons,” Will told Beverly, and she directed their steps in the correct direction. He let himself be dragged by his entirely too energetic and happy friend. She was all smiles and laughs, happy to have Will back. Will tried to smile to keep her spirits up, but he was pretty sure all he did was grimace. Bev didn't seem to mind though. He was glad she didn't ask questions.

“Will, Bev!” That voice got him looking up. There was Hannibal. His boyfriend waved at them from a cluster of couches the older student had clearly claimed for the three of them. Hannibal opened his arms when they got close and Will didn't hesitate to sink into the embrace. It was pathetic but he really wished he could live in those arms forever. Hannibal kissed his forehead gently.

“Good class?” he asked softly.

Will nodded pulling away to smile up at him, “Yeah, catching up on the lectures is gonna be hell, but at least I didn't miss any big projects.”

“Good. But I'm sure Beverly can help you too,” Hannibal added. He was pulled down to sit on the couch beside Hannibal. Beverly took the seat catty corner to him on the other couch

and pulled out her laptop.

“I’ve got notes on the slides from the last couple lectures. You study those,” Beverly handed over her laptop.

“Don’t you need your computer?” Will asked nervously.

Beverly shook her head and grinned, “I’m gonna actually try reading the book that goes with this class,” She held up the textbook, “Let’s see how long it takes before I fall asleep.”

“You are an exceptionally terrible student, Miss Katz,” Hannibal teased dryly.

Beverly chuckled, opening the large textbook meaningfully, “Not terrible, just a lazy straight A student.”

Will bit his lip. He needed to do those readings as well, but he didn't have any of his class books. No money to rent them, certainly not rich enough to buy them. Instead, he had been reading all he could from the university’s library copy when he had a chance. It was hard because he couldn't check out the reference books and if he could, he'd have to return it within the week. He needed to go to the library soon. He had tests and papers coming up and he needed to do those readings.

He sighed, feelings of hopelessness beginning to bubble up again. The longing for a drink to take it away. He could almost hear the local bar calling to him. He knew there was one near campus that wouldn’t check ID. He had seen other students going there. He could slip away and drown his misery. Hard liquor faded everything.

Hannibal’s arm slid behind him on the couch, his hand resting protectively on his shoulder. Hannibal leaned in and kissed his forehead chastely.

“You alright, Mylimasis?” He asked.

Will nodded curtly. Even though he definitely wasn’t feeling alright. He wanted to burst out that everything was impossible. He’d never succeed. But he didn't, he tried to be practical, “I need to go to the library and do the readings too.”

Hannibal nodded simply. “We’ll go to the library tomorrow. Focus on the notes for now.”

Will pulled out his notebook out and studiously copied Beverly’s typed notes and read the online posted slides. He let his mind focus on terminology and definitions instead of his hopelessness. It helped that Hannibal stayed right by his side the whole time. Quicker than he expected, he finished the slides and notes, completing his own in his cramped script in his notebook. He sighed rubbing his eyes, Beverly’s computer read almost two hours had passed.

“Are you tired?” Hannibal asked, the older student was also reading from his own textbook and taking notes on his tablet. The fancy stylist turning Hannibal’s cursive into digital text.

Will leaned his head back on his boyfriend’s shoulder. If they weren’t in the middle of the common’s he’d fall asleep right there.

“Yeah,” He murmured sleepily.

Hannibal chuckled and pulled him closer. He gently pulled the laptop from Will’s lap, letting Will relax better. “Should we get you home?”

“I don’t really want to move,” Will complained.

Hannibal turned his body more towards Will, taking not just Will’s head but letting him lean against him more. Will welcomed the warm body, letting himself rest against his boyfriend, lulled by the small motions of Hannibal’s writing and the sound of Beverly now typing on her computer. It was relaxing, and Will let his eyes close.

He was aroused at the sound of his name.

“Will!”

Will turned at his name, blinking wearily around the commons. He found the source of the sound and his heart leaped.

There she was. Her pretty brown hair, her big mousy eyes, the makeup that made her look too pale, but hid the bruise on her cheek.

Will stood before he could think about what he was doing.

“Margot.”

*

2 years ago

Will’s footsteps echoed around the large manor. It was cold and empty. He hadn’t seen a another person yet. He was hungry and thirsty and had a terrible headache. He should go home, but his dad might have locked him out. His old man had started dead bolting the doors when he felt Will wasn’t being grateful enough. It was either chance the outside, possibly get beaten by his dad, or deal with Mason.

Mason at least had food.

His feet took him to where he semi-remembered the kitchen to be. He had been to Mason’s place several times, but in the past few weeks it was becoming a regular nightly occurrence. Will would spend the night and then leave. Or he was kicked out in the morning once Mason was tired of him.

Last night had been a different kind of horrible. Mason had taken him out to a club with all his friends. Will hated it. The club was loud and the strobing lights made him nauseous. Mason had paraded him around and made him sit on everyone’s lap. His friends were horrible. They groped him and tried to kiss him the whole night. He tried to stay with Mason, but the man was almost encouraging his friends to feel him up. Will didn’t understand why. Mason had at least gotten him drink after drink that made him feel a lot better. He was wasted by the end of the night. He had forgotten to even care who was grabbing him or kissing him.

He knew Mason had taken him home. He also knew Mason had fucked him from how sore he was and the dried cum on his back. He had a new knife scar on his side too. It scared him that Mason used knives on him, but it also calmed the man's mania. Will just had to scream and cry for a little and the man would hold him close and kiss him. It was a bad deal, but Will didn't have any other option. Mason took care of him after all. And he never went too far.

Mason had left him alone this morning, going on some trip. He'd told Will he could stay the morning. A small kindness that Will had earned for his good behavior at the party. Will gratefully slept in. He was exhausted and hung over and extremely glad it was the weekend. If he went to school like this they might call his dad, which was an immediate beating.

Eventually, his head ache became too intense and he knew he needed to drink something. Which is how he found himself wondering around the giant house. He had pulled his stained sweater over his head and managed to get his feet in his boxers before giving up on his jeans. They had dried cum stains on the leg. He sorely hoped it was Mason's and not somebody else's.

He hugged himself closely, the house was cold and his body trembled trying to keep him warm. His bare feet felt like icicles, but he hadn't been able to find his socks. He hoped Mason had them somewhere, he only had a few pairs. He quickly navigated to where he thought the kitchen should be. He found it easily enough. The giant kitchen was meant for hosting a whole crew of chefs. Long stainless steel counters, manufacturing level appliances, huge double door fridges and freezers. Will just hoped he could find some cereal.

But first water. He limped over to the giant basin of a sink. He turned on the faucet and stuck his face underneath the flow, gulping mouthfuls of water. It was so cool and refreshing he stuck his whole head underneath. The cold water felt incredible against his throbbing head.

"There are showers you know."

Will whipped around, water droplets flying from his hair.

A young woman sat at a table. She was naturally pretty with a bit of a sarcastic smirk. She had a bowl of sliced apples she was eating from. He completely missed her in his beeline to the sink.

"Who are you?" Will asked nervously.

The lady grinned and snapped a bite of apple, "I live here. Who are you?"

Will gapped at her. He hadn't thought about the possibility of Mason having a family. Was the older man married to this woman? Is that why he kicked him out of the house every morning? Did she know about their relationship? Was she angry?

Will swallowed, "I- eh, sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt. I'll go now."

He turned, meaning to scurry out, but the lady called out to him, "Did Mason feed you at least?"

He looked back, she had pushed the bowl of apple slices towards him. She gestured for him to sit by her. He stood frozen, half thinking this was a trap so she could punish him for being with Mason.

“Come on,” She beckoned, “You look starved. Sit and eat with me and then you can get out of here before Mason comes back.”

“Mason's coming back?” Will asked hopefully. Despite how scared he was of Mason, he still believed the man loved him. He longed for the man's care and so he imagined it in the spaces between Mason's terror.

The lady rolled her eyes, “Unfortunately yes.”

Will took a hesitant step towards her, “Mason won't be angry, I've talked to you?”

“Mason's a fucking psycho. Just don't mention it to him.”

He had no argument against that, so he bit his lip and nervously took a seat. She pushed the apple slices towards him. He took one and bit into it, it was delicious.

“Thank you Mrs. Verger,” He said, keeping his eyes low.

The woman laughed, “It's *miss* Verger. Mason's my asshole brother.”

Will must have looked comically relieved and surprised because the woman laughed again.

“It's Margot. And don't worry. I'm nothing like my brother.”

*

He embraced her, letting his face bury in her brown hair. She smelled like apple cider and cinnamon. She held him back, squeezing him tightly.

“Are you OK?” He asked, finally pulling away from her embrace, holding at arm's length to study her face. She looked pale and he could see her make up hiding a bruise under her eye. He let his hand hover over it, before she lightly brush it away, stepping back.

“I'm fine, Will,” She replied easily, “You?”

Her eyes flickered over his own fading bruises.

“Nothing new,” He said.

“I'd say there's a lot new,” Margot looked behind him where he could feel Hannibal's guarded eyes staring. He glanced over and Hannibal's expression immediately softened though his posture hadn't. His boyfriend was standing like a guard. Even Beverly was sitting to attention.

“Eh, this is Hannibal. My—my boyfriend.” It felt weird in his mouth saying to Margot. Her expression didn't change as she took in Hannibal. His boyfriend used this opportunity to

insert himself at Will's side, drawing him away from Margot and placing himself between them, though not obviously.

"Hannibal, this is Margot," he said nervously. Hannibal had a pinched smile. He did not look pleased.

"Margot *Verger*," Hannibal said curtly, "What do we owe the pleasure?"

Will blinked up in surprise. Hannibal knew she was a Verger? He shouldn't have been surprised, Hannibal was good at knowing things.

If Margot was worried, she didn't show it. She smiled, "Nice to meet you Hannibal *Lecter*."

Will looked between the two of them as they locked in some sort of argument with their eyes.

He shifted nervously, "W—what are you doing here Margot?"

"Indeed, Miss Verger. What are you doing here?" Hannibal repeated, but he had a venom to his tone. Will nudge him with his elbow, *be nice*. The older student only wrapped his arm around his waist protectively.

"I was honestly hoping to talk to you, Will."

The 'talk to Will *alone*' went unsaid but hung in the air nonetheless. Will licked his lips nervously. His anxiety quickly making him remember the bar. A drink sounded lovely. It'd calm his nerves. It would be safe too, close to campus. He could ask Margot privately why she was here. If she was really ok.

"Unfortunately, Will is in the middle of studying," Hannibal responded for him as he tugged Will closer to his side.

"I need to talk to him," Margot replied tightly.

"Perhaps another time would be best?" Hannibal evaded smoothly.

"Do you speak for him?" Margot argued, her frown was distinct, "It's just a conversation."

"I don't think that is a good idea," Hannibal said curtly.

"And you *think* for him too?" She heatedly lashed back.

Will put his hands up. They trembled slightly and he wished for a drink to calm himself, "Please stop."

As quickly as Margot's anger showed, it dissipated. She was back to her sad demure normal-Margot self. "Sorry, Will. I just want to talk to you," Margot pleaded. Her eyes were all wide and sad. She knew how to get to him, knew he couldn't say no to her.

"Yeah," Will agreed quickly, "Why don't we find somewhere quiet?"

With a drink. A drink would fix his anxiety.

“Will—” Hannibal tried to start.

“It's OK, Hannibal,” Will interrupted, “We won't go far.”

“Need company?” Beverly asked. She looked worried too. She didn't even know half of his problems, yet she was still concerned. He felt bad leaving her after just getting back to school.

“Nah, I'll be back in a bit.” He assured as he stepped away from Hannibal.

His boyfriend seemed less inclined to let him go, “Will, let me accompany you.”

Will shook his head quickly. “It's fine, I'll be back here soon, OK?”

He didn't want Hannibal to know if he drank. He'd feel guilty then. But he already felt guilty ditching Hannibal. It made him want to drink even more badly.

“How long will you be gone?”

“Hannibal, it's not a big deal,” Will shot irritably, “I'll be back when we're done.”

Hannibal cupped his face gently, “I'm not trying to control you, Will. Beverly and I may be close to finishing here. I need to know if I should stay here to meet you or meet you at the house or somewhere else.”

The spark of anger died in Will. He knew he was being an asshole. He sighed, rubbing his face, “I'm sorry.”

“You've nothing to apologize for,” Hannibal soothed.

Will nodded. Only half believing him. “Can you stay here? I'll text you if we're gonna be long.”

“As you wish. I will also let you know if I leave for any reason. Alright?”

“Thanks,” Will agreed.

Hannibal kissed him lightly on the cheek, “Be safe, mylimasis,” Hannibal murmured.

Will nodded with a shiver and turned to leave with Margot.

*

The bar was dirty and grimy, yet had a warm atmosphere. Old and new framed photographs showed sports teams, fans, and classes. A pool table and darts in the back. Cluttered tables and booths packed into the dimly lit space. It was a sports bar for collegiates to watch football and basketball. The owners turned a blind eye to the drunken eighteen year olds staggering about with fistfuls of daddy's money to spend. It would be a loud and crowded

place in the evenings, yet thankfully it was quiet this afternoon, just a sprinkling of community regulars throughout.

Margot dusted her booth's vinyl seat before sitting, chip crumbs scattered on the floor. Will winced, a bit embarrassed by the mess. He wished he could impress Margot with some nice fancy place. Prove he was OK. Prove he got out of the gutter.

He slid in opposite her, fidgeting with his hands nervously. She reached out, grabbing his hand and flashing her comforting Margot smile. He basked in that smile. She had a way of making him feel better. Whether he had been crying alone and she brought him hot cocoa or when she helped dress Mason's nasty knife wounds. She had her own collection of scars from Mason. Yet her small smile and gentle hands had always been there for him.

"You OK Will?" She asked again.

Will nodded, quickly untangling his hands from Margot's and rubbing his face. He wanted to appear strong. Make her proud of him.

They ordered drinks, Margot a half a glass of whatever wine the bar had available and Will a shot of whiskey. Margot said nothing about him being underage to drink. She was old enough to drink legally now, but she definitely hadn't always been. Will remembered drunken nights together, when Mason went away and they could drink and drown in misery together. Laugh at the stupid cruelty of life and curse Mason when he couldn't hear. The companionship of the abused.

"Are you OK? I thought you were at school? Why aren't you there?" Will asked, taking a sip of the whiskey. They had celebrated her victory with drinks. She had finally manipulated Mason into letting her go to a tiny all-women's Baptist school a few states away. Mason had let her go because Margot hated the school venomously. She did hate it, but she had specifically mentioned it on purpose. Mason would never let her go if it was something she wanted. She had begged him *not* to send her, and so Mason had immediately registered her, and Margot was free.

Margot shrugged, "All good things come to an end, Will. You know that."

It was true. Mason had been delighted at Margot's pain for about three days. And then he got worse. Suddenly all of Mason's rage that had been split between them, was suddenly heaped on Will's head. Will had tried to get away, but that's when Will was branded. Bedridden for weeks with only Mason and Cordell playing doctor. He cried wishing for Margot to come back, for her soft hands to comfort and soothe. But then he felt horrible for wishing that. She was free, why would he want to drag her back to his hell hole? That's when he decided he had to get away. Not like Margot had, but a clean break. Nothing holding him back.

"I'm sorry, Margot. How was it?" He asked soberly.

"The school? It was better than home," She said softly.

"Are you still in school though?" Will worried.

“I’m still enrolled,” Margot replied vaguely.

“Mason hasn’t– He hasn’t?”

“I’m still enrolled,” Margot said a bit more sharply than before, “That’s not what I wanted to talk about, OK? Look Will. I’m not going to beat around the bush,” She said in a rush, “You need to come back home.”

Chapter End Notes

MIA?

That's me.

Hope to bring you more soon and not wait several months for an update. Everyone who's still reading, ya'll are the true rockstars. :)

The open sky all around

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

... “Look Will. I’m not going to beat around the bush,” She said in a rush, “You need to come back home.”

Will didn’t think he heard her correctly. He gave a short bark of a laugh, “What?”

She did not laugh. Her expression remained serious. “Home, Will. You need to come home.”

Will drained his whiskey. Coughing at the burn, “Home?”

She nodded firmly, “You have to come back.”

He couldn't believe his ears. What was she saying? How could she be saying it? She had to be joking, but her face clearly showed she wasn't.

He frowned, reaching for his glass only to remember he drank it all. She slid her untouched wine to him. She winced as he took it and downed it in a big gulp.

“I’m not going back to Louisiana,” He gasped after finishing the drink. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, avoiding her eyes, “My dad doesn’t want me. Why would I go back?”

“It's not about your dad.”

He shivered hearing her tone. It was cold, not her usual warmth, “W-what do you mean?”

“I mean, Mason.”

“What?”

Margot sighed, "You're the only one who can control him.”

He recoiled, “I don't control him.”

“Yes, you do,” She placed her hand over his, “He’s a thousand times better when you're there.”

He ripped his hand away. “That's not true, he's terrible all the time!”

But even as he said it, he knew there was truth to her words. He balanced Mason, gave him a punching bag when he needed one. He and Margot were both his personal punching bags. They made him less insane to the rest of the world.

“Will, you and I know Mason best. *I* know him. I’ve never seen him so bad in my life when you were gone.”

“How can he be any worse than he already is?” Will argued, even though he already knew how bad. He had been with Mason without Margot. He had the scars to prove it.

Margot pursed her lips, “He hurt one of my friends at college.”

Will grimaced, “Are they OK?”

It was a stupid question. They had come in contact with Mason, of course they wouldn't be OK. Yet it was really a gauge of how hurt they had been.

“She's in the hospital,” Margot summarized curtly.

“I'm sorry.”

“You should be,” Margot agreed, “And you should know he's back visiting the shelter every weekend!”

Will shuddered and whispered, “Why would he go back to the shelter?”

“Because you're not there!”

“You can't blame that on me.”

“Will, he wouldn't go if you were there. Do you want him to go after those boys?”

“Of course I don't!”

“Then you need to stop him. Come home.”

“Margot...”

“Will, he hurt me. He got suspicious about the college. He visited and realized I was fucking fine there. My friend in the hospital? Ann. He fucking poisoned her cause she made me laugh. Laugh Will! He saw me laughing and went off the fucking rails!”

Her normally collected and cool nature was broken, and tears threatened to spill.

“Thank God they got her to the hospital in time! They had to pumped her stomach, Jesus! And I wasn't even able to visit her. Mason took me straight home. Wouldn't let me out of the house for weeks. I don't even know how long I was in there, but I thought Ann was dead, and I had no one for company because you weren't there! Why did you leave? It wouldn't have happened if you were there! He would never have known about Ann!”

She tears threatening to spill, her accusing words stabbing his heart. He felt the pinpricks of tears in his eyes. He didn't know what to say. There was truth to her words. Mason would have been too distracted torturing him to notice Margot living it up at college. He was the perfect distraction and plaything for Mason. And if he didn't return, Mason would continue to

grow worse. Hurting more and more innocent people. Will could save those boys at the shelter. Save Margot. He could see plainly she was bearing the brunt of Mason's ire.

“Margot—”

“Will, you're fucking coming back home. You have to for me!” She begged, wiping away her misty eyes as quick as they came.

“I-I can't,” Will whispered.

“Yes you can!” Margot fired back, her countenance angry, “You have to come back.”

“Margot please—”

“Mason's going to do some fucked up shit and it's going to be your fault. You could have prevented it.”

“No—I—I —”

“If you ever cared about me you would help me,” Margot accused.

Will cover his face. He was overwhelmed and guilt ridden. He hadn't thought of the consequences of his leaving. He hadn't thought about who he would hurt. He had just wanted out. It was selfish and now Margot was here crying and begging for him to return. He didn't know what to do.

He was suddenly embraced in warm arms. Margot had slipped from her seat and join him on his side. She pulled him to her chest, soothing him as she had many times before.

“It's ok, Will, it's ok,” Margot hushed gently.

Will realized he was crying. Somewhere her emotions had been too much and he reflected them. Feeling all her anger and fear.

“I—I'm s-sorry, Margot,” Will sniffled, trying to calm his ragged breathing. He wasn't sure what he was apologizing for. But he felt sorry all the same.

Margot squeezed him tight, “It's OK, Will. You know I love you, right?”

Tearfully he nodded. For a moment he had been afraid she didn't love him anymore. Because he screwed up her life, but this was Margot. Margot always forgave him.

“I'm sorry. I'm sorry.”

“Will it's gonna be OK. You can make it all better. Right?” She was rubbing his back now.

“I'm scared,” He whimpered. Because he was. Mason was horrible and terrible. He didn't want to go back. He knew he'd be saving lives, but he still didn't want to go.

“Don't be scared. I'm here. We'll talk to Mason together.”

“Margot—”

“We’ll explain you leaving was a misunderstanding. I know he’ll welcome you back. He’s a fucking psycho but he likes you! He’ll be *so* happy when you come back.”

Mason happy. The image was not ideal. Mason was only happy when he was hurting someone. Will remembered the smell of his own flesh burning. He could remember Mason's crazed laughter. He pulled away shaking his head, “Margot— no, I can’t. I can’t go back!”

Her eyes narrowed and she looked hurt, “But you have to. He will keep hurting innocent people. You can help save them. You can help me and Ann!”

He felt trapped in his seat, no way to flee from her reproachful eyes. Eyes that were usually so friendly and warm, now scrutinized him like a squirming bug. He opened his mouth to try and explain but he couldn’t, not with her mouth dipping into an outright frown.

“Why are you making this so hard, Will?” Margot snapped, “Mason wants you back. Just come back!”

“Please, Margot,” Will tried to start, “You don't understand.”

“You're being selfish!”

He flinched. He was being selfish. He didn't want to be hurt anymore. He didn't want to be afraid anymore. If that made him selfish, then he was very selfish. He felt empty and horrible. The disappointment and fear from Margot was almost palpable in the air. He stared at the glasses, willing one of them to fill magically so he could drink. He sighed tiredly when they didn't.

“It's not like I don't want to help you, Margot but—,” He struggled to find the right words, “But—maybe I don't need to be the person to save everyone.”

She said nothing. And he couldn’t bring himself to meet her eyes. She was angry with him. It felt more painful than an iron to the back. He bravely managed to look up, not daring to meet her eye. She was typing on her phone quickly, before sliding it back into her pocket. The stoney expression still on her face.

He briefly thought of Hannibal waiting. He should text him and let him know he would be back soon. Unfortunately, Margot spoke before he could.

“There's always a *but* with you Will. You know you're the only one that can help. I need you home. And so does Mason. All of us. You're coming home.” Margot's voice was distant and hard, making him shiver.

“I need to go,” He said softly, scooting towards her to try and get out of the booth. She didn't budge, “Margot, please, I need to get back to Hannibal.”

“You're going home.” She said stubbornly.

He shook his head, “Margot, stop this please.”

“Mason will be here any minute. And you need to be glad to see him.”

He gaped at her as his blood ran cold, “What?”

“Mason's going to bring you home.”

“Margot, why would you call him?” He asked desperately.

“I have to protect Ann,” She said softly.

“But Margot—”

“I'm afraid he's going to hurt her again.”

“How am I supposed to help her?” Will asked, his pulse was quick and he could feel the perspiration beading on his forehead. He needed to get out of here.

“I'm sorry, Will” Her hands clenched, “I'm really sorry.”

“Margot, please, let me go.”

Margot didn't answer. She refused to meet his eyes. Refused to budge from her seat blocking his exit.

“Margot?” Will asked desperately, “Margot— Margot please.”

“Margot doesn't want to talk to you, Will.” A sick voice said.

Will slowly let his eyes rise to see Mason standing by the booth looking arrogant and triumphant. The large bodied Cordell loomed behind him, giving Will a creepy toothy sneer.

Mason pulled Margot roughly from her seat and slid next to Will instead. She stumbled up only to be manhandled by Cordell back into the seat on the other side. Cordell lumbered in next to her. She looked scared and wouldn't raise her eyes. Will shrunk, cornered in the vinyl seat by Mason who looked utterly delighted by his fear.

“What? No, hello Will?” Mason's hand trailed his face, then viciously gripped his hair, forcing him to look up at his cruel face.

“Stop Mason!” He whimpered, trying to peel Mason's hand off him.

Mason's nails dug into his scalp and he shook him, “Say hello.”

“Hello, Mason!” Will cried out in pain. He tried to keep his voice down, not wanting to cause a scene.

Mason laughed, but thankfully released his hair. He not so gently patted Will's cheek, “There you go. Always the worst with greetings. But you learn.” Will flinched at each touch. Mason grinned sadistically, “Just like a dog.”

“Please, Mason, I just want to go. Let me go,” Will begged.

“You ran out on me twice now, Will. You think I’m stupid enough to let you go a third time?”

“Mason—”

“We are all going to sit here and have some drinks and then you're gonna pack your skinny little ass back to Louisiana.”

“I’m not going anywhere with you,” Will said bravely.

“Oh baby,” Mason chuckled, “It’s like you grew a pair. Where’d all this new found confidence come from?”

Cordell huffed a laugh before lumbering up and disappearing to the bar. Will tried to get Margot’s attention. Get her to run since she could slip out now. But she stayed hunched over and not moving. She wouldn’t meet his eyes.

A hand pressed against his crotch. He gasped scooting backwards, trying to get away.

Mason’s hand didn’t follow, letting him go this time. The man was grinning like a kid at a candy store.

“There’s the twitchy little brat I know,” Mason leaned in close, “Remember the nights in the movies? You used to be so eager.”

“Don’t touch me,” Will tried to sound strong, but his voice shook.

“Aw, don’t be shy. We’ll keep it PG for Margot,” Mason’s hand grabbed his upper thigh. Will wanted to shake it off, to scream, but his growing anxiety pressed down on his chest. Making it hard to breathe, hard to move. It was like his vision was narrowing.

“I don’t like it,” His voice was small, he felt like he was a teenager again. Stuck in the back of the theater. Everything was too hot and stuffy. “Please stop.”

“Margot, have you ever heard him so whiny before?” Mason asked his sister. Her eyes flashed up momentarily before dropping. She shuffled uncomfortably in her seat. She unfortunately had been the witness to Mason’s behavior with Will too many times to be surprised at her brother. She looked resolutely away.

Mason squeezed his thigh, “So whiny. I thought I told you not to talk back. Didn’t I fucking tell you that at home? Or did you just run away before I could get to that?”

“Mason—”

“No, shut up you stupid bitch.”

Will’s mouth shut close and he squeezed his eyes closed willing this to all go away. The hand felt like it was burning his skin.

“Imagine my surprise when I come to serve you breakfast on a fucking platter, and you’re just gone. We spent a nice evening together with the whole drinks and fucking hot make-up

sex only for you to just disappear again? Damn it Will. It's like you don't think."

"That's not what happened," Will said softly, his eyes stung as he fought tears.

"I said shut up, I'm not done talking. So, I look through the tapes," Mason voice dipped conspiratorially, "Because I know I fucked you too hard for you to just walk away in the morning."

A tear escaped from his eye. He let it fall, hoping Mason didn't notice it.

"You know what I see on the footage? I see a little intruder sneaking in the back and carrying you out. All heroic and shit except that's stealing. Because you're mine."

Cordell arrived back to the table with drinks. A shot of whiskey was placed in front of him. Will was certain it was drugged. Because that was Cordell's specialty and because it would make getting him in a car easier. A drunk college student being helped out by his friends. Passerbyers would applaud them while Will would scream in silent stupor.

He pushed the glass away. "I'm not fucking yours. So you can just shove it Mason."

The words would have meant something if his voice didn't crack at every word. If he stopped trembling. If he threw off Mason's hand. If he shoved the man over and stomped out of the bar. But all he could do was mumble them with his head down.

Mason laughed, making him flinch. "Big fucking balls."

Cordell agreed and pushed the glass back into his hands still trembling on the table, "Drink it whore."

"Excuse me," A loud voice bellowed. They all looked up startled.

Officer Crawford stood in the dimly lit bar, his uniformed presence drawing attention from the sparse drinkers.

He scanned the bar until his eyes fell on Will. His eyes narrowed and he marched directly up to their table.

"Will Graham. I don't remember you being over twenty-one when I last talked to you."

Will's hands left the glass like it burnt him, falling quickly back under the table. Mason had let go of his thigh.

"What are you drinking?" Crawford asked narrowly.

"It's not mine," Will said quickly.

"You were holding it son," Crawford sighed exasperatedly.

"Officer, is there a problem?" Mason smiled charmingly.

“Yes, there is an underage drinker sitting at your table. Why is he drinking? And who's buying him alcohol?” Crawford said flatly.

“Oh, he's not drinking, he's just hanging out with us,” Cordell smiled.

“Hm,” Crawford did not look pleased, “C’mon Will. I want to have a conversation with you outside. C’mon.”

The officer stood back gesturing. There was no argument, Mason glared but slid out of the booth and stood angrily. Will blinked slowly at the free passage away from his corner hell. Scarcely believing it, he scooted to the end and stood shakily.

Mason grabbed him and pulled him into a rough kiss. Will froze the horrible lips on his, before he was freed. Mason let him go but not without digging his fingers in his back, right on his mark.

“I’ll see you later baby.”

Shocked, Will stumbled after officer Crawford. They exited the simply lit bar into the cold sunny afternoon. Will hazily wiped his mouth with his sleeve. The taste of Mason seemed to be lingering.

“What the hell are you doing Will?” Crawford asked, standing by his police vehicle. Arms crossed looking ever so much like the stern fatherly type.

Will winced and shuffled his feet, “I dunno.”

“Getting drunk midweek is a stupid, stupid thing to do.”

“I’m not drunk,” Will valiantly defended himself.

Crawford leaned in close, Will couldn't meet his eyes, “Your breath stinks. You might not be drunk, but you're on your way there. C’mon Will, what are you thinking?”

“I don't want to think!” Will snapped, crossing his arms.

“Look kid, you're not in trouble.” Crawford leaned back showing his hands in peace, “I’m not going to press anything, but you are getting yourself involved with a lot of shady people.”

“You think I don't know that?”

“I think you know, and I think you don't know what to do.”

Will looked away biting his lip. He didn't know what to do. His plan had been to escape and disappear. He hadn't planned on Mason finding him. Or maybe he hadn't let himself think about the possibility.

“That's your ex right?” Crawford summarized.

“Yes,” Will scowled.

“Why are you letting him kiss you?”

“I didn't let him do anything!” Will hissed, “He just did it! I didn't ask for it.”

“Will. That's assault,” Crawford said carefully, “Do you want to press charges?”

“No! No, I don't. He just kissed me. It's not a big deal,” Will said quickly. He unconsciously wiped his mouth again with his sleeve. “It's not a big deal.”

“What is a *big deal*?” Crawford asked, “Is it a big deal if you're passed out in a hospital?”

“Shut up—”

“Is it a big deal turning up with enough drugs in your system to kill a rhino?”

“Just shut up, I don't know anything about that!”

“Or is a big deal rape? Because that's what you're really avoiding.”

Will felt sucker punched. He turned away, meaning to walk as fast as he possibly could in the other direction.

His arm was caught. “Will, you need to talk to me.”

“No,” Will whipped around, “I don't. You're not gonna help me because I don't need any fucking help.”

“Kid, you're a mess. This Verger guy found you after you drove halfway across the country. He's not gonna leave you alone. Let us help you. I don't want to see you get hurt.”

“No one's helped me before. So sue me if I don't think you're going to be the exception.” Will bit back.

“Give us a chance. I'd certainly like to try.”

Will shook his head, “I don't believe you. Cops have never helped me.”

He thought about the security at the bars, the ones that had turned a blind eye to a minor high on drugs and carted around with dirtbags, the ones on Mason's payroll who would only report to Mason, the ones who left him with abusers like his father and Mason to beat and fuck no matter how they'd like. No cops would ever help him.

“I'm sorry, Will,” Crawford said, “I don't know your story, and I shouldn't assume to know, but I'm here for you. Whenever you're ready, I'm here.”

Crawford may be different, but Will refused to allow even the possibility of his help enter his mind. He hugged himself tight, that being about Hannibal's arms around him.

“Can I go now?” Will said curtly.

Crawford sized him up for a moment before waving him off, “Yeah go ahead, I better not see you again in a bar, got that?”

“Yeah.”

“Hannibal's over there,” Crawford pointed to a side street, “He called me. You might not think anybody's on your side, but that kid sure as heck cares about you.”

Will blinked surprised, “He called you?”

“Uh huh,” The man pulled out a pack of crumpled Marlboros. He drew out one of the sticks and lit it, “Seemed to think you were in trouble. He was right, wasn't he?”

Will bit his lip, looking away, “I'm fine.”

The officer snorted and rolled his eyes. “Here,” he held out a card, “My number. Call if you need anything, ok?”

Will took it and slipped it in his back pocket. He quickly hurried to where the cop had pointed.

“Hey– remember what I said,” Crawford yelled after him, “I don't want to see you in another bar. Got it?”

Will waved dismissively. He wouldn't be going to anymore bars. It was too dangerous now. But he didn't want to give the cop the satisfaction of agreeing. He booked it towards the side street. Relief washed over him when he spotted the Bentley waiting.

Chapter End Notes

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